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Nick Doyle, Gold-Hunter.



NICK DOYLE,
THE GOLD HUNTER.

A TALE OF CALIFORNIA.

BY P. HAMILTON MYERS.

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NICK DOYLE

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BY P. HAMILTON RIVERS

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NICK DOYLE,

THE GOLD-HUNTER

CHAPTER I.

Frederick Innis was a young lawyer of — street, who flourished amazingly for three years on anticipations, and whose nicely carpeted office during all that period had never once been soiled by the plebeian tread of a client. But Fred was a man who kept his own counsels, (which he could well afford to do, as he had none of other people to keep,) and so he told no one that he was poor, and that he could with difficulty pay his way, for he knew enough of human nature to understand that of all ways to obtain business, showing yourself to be greatly in need of it, is the very worst. He paid his bills, when he *did* pay them, with an air, and demanded receipts like a man who is quite used to handling that kind of manuscript. He *put off* bills with an air, too, and always felt himself bound in honor, when he sent a dunning artisan away empty handed, to console him by a new order for something else in his line.

"I have taken the liberty, Mr. Innis, of bringing this little bill," says Mr. Mildman, "as I have a sum to make up to-day."

"So have I, Mildman. Singular coincidence, isn't it? Sorry I haven't the spelter for you. It was a deuced fine coat, too—equal to the best in the city; and, by the way, it's almost gone now—getting quite seedy. Have you any more of this piece?"

"Oh, yes," says Mildman, with sparkling eyes, "several patterns."

"I'll call around and be measured this afternoon, and next month I'll remember you."

And the tailor would depart well pleased, nor was Fred less so, having performed a good action, as he supposed, for no doubt of ultimate solvency or even affluence ever troubled his mind.

When it was to come, or where from, he had no very distinct idea, but opportunity, he doubted not, would offer itself to him, as it does to every man, once at least in his life, and he watched and waited for it. Not idle either, for he had his employments, though they were rather literary than professional, and not a little laborious, too, such as the plowman need not envy. It was thus that, like, and yet widely unlike Micawber, he waited for something to *turn up*.

Well, something *did* turn up. California turned up, (literally, a great part of it, under the spade and pick-axe,) and Fred's quick ear caught the first chink of the golden gravel from that far country. Without thinking twice on the subject, he resolved *to go*. He had few friends to trouble him with their advice or warning; the love of adventure was strong within him, and hope was bright and buoyant.

If Mr. Innis had few friends, however, he had a great many acquaintances, and a great many heads were shaken in derision at his project.

"Better stay at home, and mind his business," said old Mr. Twiggs, who had been a particular friend of Fred's father, and was now a very rich man, and the President of a Bank, but who had never once raised his finger to assist the struggling young lawyer, when it would scarcely have required more than the raising of a finger on his part to ensure him a prosperous business.

"I thought he was more steady. I really had hopes of Fred," continued Twiggs, who had given two hundred notes, and twenty or thirty mortgages to the fat firm of Plod & Puller, to collect within the last year, a tithe of

which would have been the setting up of Innis; "but some men seem to have no stability."

"Then he is so handsome, papa, and has such a fine figure," said Miss Twiggs. "It isn't possible that he means to dig."

"Dig! Why not?" replied Twiggs, sinking into a luxurious velvet-covered rocking-chair, and resting his arms upon its cushioned sides. "Why shouldn't *he* dig, I should like to know, as well as other people! I am only afraid that he will find digging of no avail, unless, as is most likely, he takes to canals or railroads."

"Oh, papa, how shocking!"

"Not at all. The world must have its 'hewers of wood and drawers of water,'" said Twiggs, uncorking a bottle of sherry.

"But, papa," continued Kitty, with a very innocent look, "have not I heard you say that Mr. Innis's father was a particular friend of yours?"

"Certainly—that is to say—yes. What of it?" stammered the banker, a little in doubt whether his daughter's question had any hidden meaning.

"Oh, nothing," replied Kitty, with another very innocent look.

"Yes," continued Twiggs, growing loquacious, and pleased at having a good listener, "Mr. Samuel Innis and I were schoolmates, and intimate from childhood. He was the son of a rich man. I was the son of a poor man. He died insolvent the very year that I was made President of the Bank of —, with a thousand shares of stock standing in my own name, besides as much more capital in real estate. That is the difference between men. But he was a clever fellow, Innis was. He helped me to my first good position in business—up the first round of the ladder of fortune. After that I climbed myself. He was rich, then, Innis was, and it was no trouble to him."

"How came he to fail? Was he very extravagant?"

"No, but he was too easy and accommodating. He was in a large business, and it was the old story of endorsement for friends during that black year in commercial his-

tory, 1836. He was on the paper of Tom, Dick, and Harry, and half a dozen more, who exploded around him like a bundle of fire-crackers in July—a perfect *feu-de-joû* of failures—he bringing up the rear to the tune of a quarter of a million.”

“Ah, how unfortunate! I wonder he never came to you for help.”

“He *did* come, twenty times. That just showed how inconsiderate he was. As if I were going to thrust my nose into the trap, just as it was about to be sprung, too. You see it was only a suspension at first, and he said he could get through with twenty thousand, for cash was everything in those days, and worth just ten times what it now is, and he had friends, he said, who could raise half the sum, if he could procure the balance. He was *certain* that ten thousand from me would save him.”

“Well, did it?”

“Why, what a foolish question. He had not a particle of security to offer, excepting his tangled business. Of course I could do nothing for him, though I was very sorry for him.”

“How much were you worth then, papa?”

“I?” said Twiggs, with brightening eyes, and totally obtuse as to the drift of his daughter’s questions. “Two hundred thousand dollars at least, in the very soundest property, and without a debt in the world.”

“How long did Mr. Innis live after this?”

“Only a few years. I think he died in 1839, but I am not quite certain of the time, as I rather lost sight of him after his failure, though we had been quite intimate before.”

Kitty sighed and remained silent. What her thoughts were can only be guessed from her questions, and from a very ingenuous and sweet expression of countenance which had grown mournful as she listened to her worldly and selfish sire. Kitty knew Fred well. They had often met at parties, more often than Twiggs knew anything about, and very good friends they were, too. There was, indeed, something very much like love between them, if

It was not the genuine article, but neither suspected any such sentiment in the other, nor would Kitty have even allowed it to herself. There was sincere admiration on both sides, which was unavoidable, as each possessed good taste, and the qualities that gratify it, but Kitty, in her simplicity, did not think herself worthy of such a noble fellow as Fred, nor capable of inspiring affection in his heart. As to Fred, he scorned all appearance of mercenary views in matrimony, and old Twiggs scorned all appearance of poverty in a suitor for his daughter, and between these two scorings Kitty might as well have been locked up in an enchanted castle, and Fred have been an enchanted horseman on the gateway arch, so far apart were they, and so inaccessible to each other.

Innis was therefore not a wooer of the banker's daughter. He had never suffered his mind to dwell upon her with any matrimonial hopes, and it was with no perceptible pang that he prepared to separate himself so widely from her with the full expectation, if he thought at all on the subject, that when next he saw her, it would be as the bride of some one of her wealthy admirers.

CHAPTER II.

Innis did not find going to California quite the easy matter that he anticipated. He met with a singular and formidable obstacle at the very starting point of his journey. There was a judgment standing against him, for no debt or proper liability of his own, an unjust claim, which he had resolved never voluntarily to discharge, unless the time should come when it would be more easy to pay than to resist it. But his wily creditor, or rather a pettifogging attorney, who had charge of the demand, had watched his opportunity, and had contrived to attach poor Fred's baggage, and even his passage ticket, which was unfortunately in one of his trunks, the very day before that of his intended departure.

Never did blow fall more heavily and unexpectedly upon a young aspirant for fortune than this. He was astonished, stunned, overcome; all his bright visions of wealth faded away from before his eyes, like the expiring hues of the summer rainbow. For the first time in his life he felt that he was poor. He had not a hundred dollars in his pocket. All else was invested in a few well-chosen articles for the California market, which would have been sure to quadruple their cost there, and which filled his largest trunk. Here, they would barely suffice, with the passage ticket included, to pay the execution of Mr. Attorney Swipes.

"It's all up," said Fred to a young friend who had called to bid him good-by, "this confounded levy knocks my project quite in the head, and, at the same time, renders it the more necessary that I should go. I have nothing in the world left, Whitman, excepting these traps and my California hopes."

"Cannot the claim be disputed?"

"No, it is a legal one, although without a shade of equity. I did all I could to contest it before judgment, and then resolved never to pay it until I could do so without incommoding myself. It has slumbered a long while, as all my small means were in money, and consequently beyond the reach of an execution, and I had quite forgotten there was such a debt. Swipes must have been watching me like a cat."

"It's hard, certainly. I wish I could help you, Fred, but you know how it is with me. I might raise a hundred for you——"

"You are very kind, Charley, but I could not take it, you know, with no certainty of ever being able to pay you again. Besides, the claim is five hundred, and it is quite impossible for me to raise it. Let them sell, and then I shall at least know that the worst has come."

Whitman left his friend somewhat abruptly, with his head full of a project of his own, for he was an ardent and enthusiastic youth, with but little knowledge of the world. He knew the rich Twiggs, and had heard from

Innis that his father had started the banker in life, and the inference to such a mind as Whitman's was unavoidable, that the old gentleman would fly, purse in hand, to the rescue of the son of his benefactor. He was mistaken, of course, and shocked besides, for he was met by the very coldest rebuff.

Whitman urged, "It is only a loan, and it is so important to him; all his prospects in life are at stake, sir—and he will be very sure to pay you, I think."

"*You think!* Perhaps you would endorse for him?" said Twiggs, sneeringly.

"Oh, with pleasure," replied Whitman.

"Are you a merchant, and if so, of whom shall I inquire of your commercial standing?"

"I am a law student."

"Oh, indeed, that will do then."

"Will it?" said Whitman, eagerly, being quite deceived by the phrase, and the tone in which it was spoken.

"I mean that I can do nothing for you, and you must excuse me now, as I have other business to attend to; but first, let me ask you whether Mr. Innis sent you on this errand?"

"By no means. He knows nothing of my application, I assure you."

"That is all, sir."

Whitman went out in a white heat of wrath, and left the banker scarcely less incensed. Twiggs' anger was the fiercer, because it was not unmingled with some upbraidings of conscience, which he tried to stifle and divert his mind from, by blaming Innis and Whitman, and the whole tribe of vagabonds, as he usually styled all poor people. He had a supreme contempt for every person who could not "make money." They were all miserable, shiftless fellows, in his estimation, without distinction, no matter how industrious or persevering they might be, or what sickness or other misfortune had been theirs. No matter, although:

"Disaster

Had followed fast, and followed faster"

upon their footsteps, it was all one to Twiggs. *He scorned them. He had succeeded. It had been easy for him. Why not they?* Nobody need tell him, he said. They did not *try*, or what was the same thing, they did not try *in the right way*.

Such was the banker's language at home that evening, as he paced his Turkey carpet in embroidered slippers, and talked to his wife and Kitty. He had told them of Fred's misfortune, and of Whitman's application, and had triumphantly justified himself, as he supposed, in their estimation. But he was mistaken. His wife, indeed, who was a fat, quiet, easy, aristocratic old lady, scarcely troubled herself to think at all on the subject. But Kitty's little heart throbbed with indignation. She had often been obliged to blush at her father's character, even as painted by himself, and had felt it difficult to retain a dutiful affection for him. But now her emotions of mortification and anger were overpowering, and she hastened to her own room, where she gave way, in soliloquy, to her feelings:

"Only five hundred dollars," she said, "and he refuses it to the son of his greatest benefactor, and when he is in distress, too. How paltry! how wicked, and how I longed to tell him so. **Poor Fred!**"

Kitty thought of appealing to her father in the young lawyer's behalf; but she felt certain that it would be unavailing, besides which, a maidenly delicacy of feeling utterly forbade that she should say or do aught which might imply a partiality for Mr. Innis. Indeed she did not think she had any such partiality.

"Such a trifle!" she continued, opening a box of jewelry. "Why these gewgaws cost thrice the sum that would make a worthy man happy, and perhaps prosperous. **A man, too, of education and talent.**"

She gazed long and thoughtfully at the treasure which was her grandmother's gift, and was exclusively her own property.

"I have a right to do what I will with these," she

said, "and if it could only be done without his knowledge——"

Again Kitty looked long and earnestly into the jewel-box. Then she rose, and wrapped it carefully in her handkerchief, put on shawl and bonnet, and calling a young brother to accompany her, she went forth, with excited air and hurried step, as if she had made up her mind to some desperate act, and was afraid her resolution would fail before she had accomplished it. She went to the house of a lawyer in the next street, an old and very worthy gentleman, who was a particular friend of her father's family, and with whom she had long been on intimate terms.

Parting with her brother at the door, she inquired for Mr. Earl, and had the good fortune to find the parlor deserted, and in a few minutes to hear the creaking shoes of her old friend, as he came out of his library. She nearly fainted at the sound, for she was wrought up to a high pitch of nervous excitement, but the mild, trembling voice of her friend partly re-assured her.

"Why, Kitty," said the old gentleman, offering his hand, "are you all alone? All our young folks are at the opera this evening."

"Oh, how glad I am. I only want to see *you*," said Kitty, dashing out the word at a breath.

"Ah, something is the matter," said Mr. Earl, who was a close observer, "something is amiss here; tell me what I can do for you."

"Promise me the strictest secrecy."

"Certainly, my dear."

"And that you will not even try to learn, much less divulge, my reasons for the request I am about to make of you."

"I promise everything to my Kitty," said the old man, playfully. "Surely you are not afraid to trust me."

The young lady hastily opened her handkerchief, and placing the box of jewels in the old gentleman's hands, said:

"In some way, by some means—I know not how—I

only know such things are done—raise for me five hundred dollars on this pledge, and place it in the hands of Mr. Seth Whitman, law student in the office of Mr. —, before ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I will advance it myself; don't tremble so, my child; there is nothing difficult in all this."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" exclaimed Kitty, with the tears now running unrestrained down her cheeks.

"I do not ask your reasons—some friend, I suppose, in distress, but as I am to act professionally in this matter, you must allow me to ask a question or two."

"No—no, ask nothing," said Kitty, rising in alarm, and taking hold of the door-knob.

"Don't be frightened, birdie," said the old gentleman, laughing. "I was only going to ask whether this money is to be given to Mr. Whitman without any message of any kind."

"Oh, certainly, he must not have the least hint as to where it comes from. He will know what to do with it."

"Doubtless. You may let him alone for that. But am I not even to ask a receipt?"

"By no means."

"Only just fling the money in his face, and come away?"

"Yes," said Kitty, laughing.

"Very well, now I know what I have to do, and you may depend on it being done before ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

Miss Twiggs heartily thanked the lawyer, and bade him good night; she would not allow him to escort her home in person, but accepted the services of one of his domestics as her protector, and then departed.

Mr. Earl had no difficulty in performing his promise. He knew the lawyer named by Miss Twiggs, as the one in whose office Mr. Whitman studied, and at ten o'clock the next morning he called there, check in hand. Whitman was at his desk, alone, drumming with his fingers a dismal tattoo, and looking very sober.

"Is this Mr. Seth Whitman?" asked Mr. Earl, advancing politely.

"That is my name," answered Seth, looking suspiciously at the paper in the stranger's hands, and by no means certain that he was not about to share the fate of Fred.

"This, then, is for you," said Earl, presenting the check.

Whitman took it, glanced at it, and leaped from his stool with a hurrah.

"Then old Twiggs has relented," he said; "I beg his pardon—the right honorable Mr. Twiggs, I mean. This came from him of course. Sit down, sir—thank you, sir—this will be the making of Fred—please to take a chair while I draw a note; it's just exactly in time—the ship sails at twelve, and he can go yet—oh, this is cap-capital; how shall I draw the note, sir?"

Seth had rattled all this off with such inconceivable velocity, that Mr. Earl had no time to utter a word. As soon as a pause did occur, he barely said "good morning," and walked off, utterly deaf to a whole string of exclamations and interrogations which Seth rattled after him.

Whitman next went in pursuit of his friend, whom he found negotiating with Swipes, and a third party, a candidate for California, for the disposal of the seized passage ticket, which it was his interest to turn into money in order to reduce the debt, and which would be valueless after twelve o'clock. Too sad to chaffer, Fred was just about consenting to let it go at half price to the bargainer, who was a shrewd Yankee, when Seth made his appearance.

"Hold on there," he said, "we are all right here, after all. How much is this levy for, Mr. Swipes?"

"Four hundred and eighty seven dollars, sixty-two and a half cents."

"Well, I have here a certified check for five hundred; so please get ready the change, and trunks."

"A check, Whitman? Impossible? Whose, and by what means obtained?" said Innis.

"That is more than *I* can tell; I thought it was old Twiggs at first, but 'tis neither in his name nor on his bank," replied Seth, drawing his friend aside, and recounting to him the mysterious manner in which the paper was placed in his hands. The signature was strange to them both, and might as well have been an Egyptian hieroglyphic, for any syllable they could make out of it; but the certification of the cashier of the bank upon which it was drawn rendered it as good as gold for all practical purposes.

"What possible reason had you to think it came from that old miserly Twiggs?" asked Innis, who knew nothing of Seth's application to him, and would have been very angry, if he had known it.

"Well, I thought it possible."

"Did not I tell you how he turned his back upon my father in his greatest need, although under the weightiest obligations to him—when by risking, and only slightly risking a twentieth part of his own property, he might have saved, as was clearly shown afterwards, an estate of half a million to my father, and his *life*, too."

Fred spoke fiercely and rapidly.

"Yes—yes, you have told me all—frequently," replied Seth.

"How often, in my boyhood, have I heard my father repeat the story, as in his poverty, he looked back longingly at the golden vision which had flitted away from him. Twiggs probably thinks I know nothing of all this, or perhaps he cares nothing if I do."

"He is a scoundrel," said Seth.

"But this money, Seth; how do you know it was intended for me at all, if nothing was said about me by the bearer?"

"Oh, it's for you; I am sure of that; you see it is just the sum you wanted, and everybody knows how intimate we are—and—and I am sure it is for you Innis, and there is no time to be lost either in rendering it available. It is now half-past ten."

"But I really think this money may have been intended as a present for you, Seth."

"Not it; nobody ever gave me a dollar in the world, and it is not very likely they would do it at this juncture of affairs. I say the money is *yours*, and if it turns out otherwise, we will call it a California investment of mine to be repaid with a bonus, when you have made your fortune out there, which I am positive you will do."

"I have a strong presentiment of that kind myself, without jesting, and I will take the money if you insist on it, and will still go by this very ship. If I succeed, Seth, you shall not repent your kindness."

"Neither shall I repent it, if you do not succeed, Fred—so make yourself easy on that score."

CHAPTER III.

Fred went to California.

The deep significance of the last four words will be understood by those who have journeyed to that land, in the early period of emigration thither before any systematic or uniform mode of travel was established. He went to Chagres, in a vessel crowded to suffocation; he spent five days in crossing the Isthmus in rain and mud and fog, and arrived at Panama, in company with hundreds of others, worn, weary and fasting, to find that town already overflowing with tired expectants of a never-coming ship, which was to take them off. He secured, with difficulty, the narrowest accommodations at the most enormous charges, and lived on food which he neither comprehended nor dared to inquire into.

A few days after his arrival, he fell into company with a tall, limber Vermonter, who said he was a *Green Mountain Boy*, and whose appearance indicated that the adjective was as justly due to himself as to his native hills. Jotham Wakely, as he called himself, was about twenty-six years of age, with a thin face and sharp features,

which would have been quite uninteresting but for a remarkably bright pair of eyes, which were perpetually moving and flashing, and seemed to permit nothing to escape their observation.

Wakely's boarding-house was near that of Innis, and they frequently met and engaged in conversation, so often indeed, that Frederick thought their interviews were not always accidental, and that the Vermonter had some design in cultivating his acquaintance.

"Wal," said Jotham, one morning, on meeting his new friend; "it is pretty tough work, this, to be kept here, waiting for a ship till one's money is spent, and you can't go when it *does* come, and can't go home neither; that's pretty hard, isn't it!"

"It is, indeed. I hope that is not your case."

"But it *is* though, and it's the same with hundreds of others; that's what kills so many, sir—they talk about the Panama fever; it's all nonsense, it's the fever of anxiety and suspense. *I've had it*; it heats the blood a'most to the b'iling p'int—and makes you feel as if you had a hot huckleberry pudding in your head instead of brains, and then you get delirious of course, and there ain't nobody to do nothing for you, and if you ain't remarkably good pluck, you die."

"Then you are pretty good pluck, I suppose?"

"Rather," said Jotham, soberly; "but I'm low-spirited to-day—for they say there will certainly be a steamer here, to take us off within three days, and I'm out of money. I haven't five dollars left, and they won't take me, of course."

"Is it possible? I am really very sorry for you."

"That's what fifty people have told me," said Jotham, "and most of 'em said they were nearly as badly off themselves, they had all been here so long; but you bave just come, as it were, only last week, and must be flush, and now I've something to propose to you."

"Oho," thought Innis—we're to have some new and ingenious mode of begging, I suppose. "Well what is it!" he continued, aloud.

"I'm going to propose a partnership between us two, you and I."

Fred looked inquiringly at his companion, to see if he were jesting, but there was every appearance of the most sober earnestness.

"A partnership?"

"Yes, a partnership."

"But you say you have nothing."

"I've got an *idée*," replied the Yankee, emphatically, "and—and"——

"You propose to divide it with me," asked Innis, laughingly.

"Yes," continued the other, eagerly, and with a fire glowing in his eyes, which might have been the light of genius—or insanity: "Yes—on condition that you pay my passage to San Francisco. It isn't everybody that I would make such an offer to; but I like your looks, and am willing to help you to make your fortune. I can as well do it as not—for I don't see any possible use that I can have for a quarter of the gold I am going to get. I don't, indeed. I have laid awake nights, thinking what I should do with it."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes, sir, and a lucky fellow you are to have met me. I've been trying to make up my mind to make this proposition to you several days, but I could not conclude to do so until I heard this morning about this ship that was a comin' so soon, and that decided me. I would rather give half than wait here any longer, and run the risk of dying."

"Half of what?"

"Of my *idée*, sir, of my *idée*—it's worth a ton of gold."

"And is not near as difficult to carry, I suppose?"

"Come this way," continued Jotham, not noticing the sneering remark of his companion, and leading the way to his room—a very small apartment, which was quite filled by a single bedstead, two trunks and a large box, and might be called crowded when its tenant was in. As to Fred, he was decidedly a supernumerary, and was

obliged to step up on one of the trunks in order to get in.

"Shut the door—if—if—you can," said Jotham, hesitatingly, he having led the way, and being in advance of his proposed partner. Innis complied.

"Now, do you see that box at the foot of the bed? It's in there."

"What! your idea?" asked Fred, who began now to think his companion was really mad.

"Yes; but before I let you see it, you are to promise me on your honor that you will take no advantage of it, unless you accede to my terms."

"Most certainly; I promise."

"Wal," said Jotham, striding over the trunks toward his treasure, "I ain't a'raid but what you'll agree fast enough, and a lucky thing it is for you, too—but first," said he, seating himself on the box, his long legs dangling against its sides—"first, let me tell you how I came to think about it. When I first came here, about two months ago, there were two Hampshire men here, who had just come from California, where they were living when the gold was first discovered, and long before we heard anything about it in the States; *they* had picked it up off the ground like gravel stones, and in three months they had such big piles that they started home with it for fear they would get robbed, and then they were coming back again, but they sartinly hadn't less than seventy or eighty thousand dollars' worth a piece, and I think one of 'em, a sly fellow, had twice as much, for he pretended that one of his bags, that weighed over a hundred, had specimens of lead in it. It's a likely story that he would carry lead so far! They were the *big chunks*," and Jotham gave a knowing nod with his head.

"Of course," said Innis.

"Well, sir, one of these fellows was a very sensible chap, and he talked a great deal about California, and I listened. I asked some questions, too—a few, you know."

"Very probable."

"He said the surface gold was pretty much all picked

up, or would be before I could get there, but there was lots of it into the rocks, if it could only be got out; but it cost more than it come to, he said, for you to hammer all day on a few pounds of rock before you could get it to pieces, and get the gold out of it, and then it wouldn't be more than half an ounce. But it was *there*, he said, millions upon millions, and there wasn't any end to it. He told me of one place where there were rocks enough to build a city, and all sparkling with very fine gold dust."

"Yes."

"But it wasn't any use, he said again, 'cause it cost more than it was worth to get it out. That was very aggravating, but it set me to thinking. I thought all night about it, and never shut my eyes once—not once, sir."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, sir; and then it was I got my *idée*. The next morning I went to Mr. Smith—that was his name—and said, said I: 'Have you got any specimens of them gold rocks?' and he said he had, and he took a piece out of his trunk, weighing about eight pounds, and showed it to me. I shouldn't have known there was any gold in it, for the particles were so fine you could scarcely see them without a microscope, and most people would never notice them at all, or would judge, like Mr. Smith, that it was quite preposterous to think of making anything by getting them out."

"Well, what did you do?"

"I bought it of him, and then I went to thinking again, and then, sir—(Innis noticed that here Jotham's eyes sparkled again with that same wild delight which he had before observed,) and then I invented a machine, sir, that will munch up these rocks as easily as you would eat apples, sir! *That's what I did, sir!*"

"Is it possible?" said Innis, beginning to be interested.

"Yes, sir!" said Jotham, jumping down from the box.

"And now, perhaps, you would like to see it eat?"

"Most certainly, if it is feeding time," said Innis, laughing.

"Oh, it's always as hungry as a Vermont schoolmaster. It can eat at any time, and what is better, its digestive organs never get out of order. It's only a small one, this is, but I have the castings making for a much a larger machine."

"But how can you get them done here?"

"It has been very difficult; but there is a kind of foundry here where they make small castings for plows, &c., and where, by doing half the work myself, I managed to get them done. Of course, I made all the patterns myself, and I had but one piece cast at a time, and took that away, and the pattern, too, before making the next piece, so that they should not suspect what I was about."

"A very discreet plan."

"But I could not raise money to get the set of large castings out of their hands, though there is only twenty dollars due on them. Think of that, sir! Just think of that! Won't that be something to laugh at when I am a millionaire?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, sir, now I'll set this little fellow in motion, just for your satisfaction, but remember that yours will be the first eyes, excepting mine, that have ever seen it go, or have ever seen it at all when it was put together. But first, just step across the street, where you see that little ledge of granite rocks, and pick up a few of the pieces that you will find lying around. Don't bring any larger than your hat, for this is only a small machine—not much more than a model."

Innis complied unhesitatingly with this request, and soon returned with a piece of solid granite, of nearly the dimensions to which he had been limited. As he re-entered, he heard a great clanking and clattering of iron and steel, and he stopped, astonished at the sight which met his eyes. Jotham, in his shirt sleeves, was at the side of the now open box, turning a crank which he had

"shipped" in its place during his absence, and setting in motion a strong, ponderous and complicated machinery of wheels, levers and hammers, which banged, rattled, creaked and screamed at a most terrific rate, and seemed to threaten instant demolition to anything which came within its iron grasp.

"Throw it in! Throw it in!" he shouted, with suffused face and sparkling eyes, as he plied the crank more vigorously. "Jest drop it right in there where you see them steel teeth and hammers—throw it in! Take care—don't go too near!"

Fred dropped the stone in the required place, and immediately heard one loud crash, and then a multitude of smaller cracklings.

"I told you so!" shouted Jotham, still pursuing his task. "I told you so! Didn't she do it nice? Didn't she munch it up like old cheese! Throw in another, quick! Another! Don't you hear her calling for more?" and he worked away at the crank more earnestly than ever.

"I did not bring any more," replied Frederick. "Stop, and let us see what has become of the stone. If it is pulverised, the proof is already as perfect as you can make it."

"Pulverised! If you can find a piece as big as a pin's-head, sir, I'll give you the machine, *I know*. Look!"

Jotham took up a portion of the material of the late stone converted into powder, and showed it to his companion.

"You might eat it, sir, with a little seasoning. There ain't any finer dust in the highway."

Innis examined it with great astonishment.

"Now, ef that had been the golden granite of Callyfor-ny," continued Jotham, "all we should have to do would be to separate the gold in the same way as they do from other dirt, and there it is, sir. How much do you think we could do of that in a day, sir? How much in a week? a month? How much in a year? I don't ask but just

one year, sir, and if we don't make over one million of dollars apiece, then, sir, we are spoonies."

"But why not go back to New York, get your machine patented, and make a fortune selling the patent rights."

"And be six months getting my letters from the Patent Office, and then find no one to believe in it—or if it succeeded, to be cheated out of all by some brainless rascal's 'improvement' on it, in the shape of an extra cog-wheel, which turned nothing, excepting the money out of my pocket into his. That would be nice, wouldn't it?"

Jotham spoke bitterly, and like a man who had had experience in patent rights.

"No, no," he continued, "we can make a fortune quicker by using these machines, and after that we can patent them or not as we choose, or we can sell them out there for an immense sum. I don't mean that any living soul shall ever see them 'cept you and I until we have done using them."

"No one but you and I? Surely you do not think we can do all the work alone?"

"We can *feed* it, sir. Don't you suppose there are any waterfalls in Callyforny to turn the cranks for us? We can feed it, can't we?"

"Oh, yes, I see," said Fred, who began to imagine himself and his companion dwelling alone in some wild, hidy region, with their tents pitched beside a stream, and their "Crusher" forever rattling and banging by their side.

He was awoke from his reverie by his companion:

"Wal, what say you now to the partnership?"

"I agree to it."

"I knew you would," said the other, without manifesting the least surprise.

"But what security am I to have that you will perform your part of the contract?"

"You may keep the 'Crusher.'"

"That will do."

"You see, I ain't afraid to trust you. But, then, I shall have the other and the larger one, after you have paid for it."

"Certainly."

"We shall have no difficulty with each other, I am convinced. I have confidence in you, and you ought to have in me, after this great mark of my regard for you."

All this was said with the air of a man who was conferring a favor, not receiving one.

"I have," replied Innis.

"It's a bargain, then?"

"It is."

And thus was this strange compact concluded, without writing or memorandum of any kind, but with a perfect simplicity and truthfulness on each side, which entirely obviated the necessity of any such formula.

Innis had barely enough money left to enable him to fulfil his bargain, but he relied on obtaining more at San Francisco, from the sale of a few choice articles of merchandise, which, as has been said, he had brought with him.

He advanced the means necessary to release the captive castings, which, on his suggestion, were not framed and made ready for use, but were packed in separate parcels, and the smaller machine was taken apart and similarly disposed of. Thus they would be subject to a lighter charge as freight, and would admit of more easy transportation from San Francisco into the interior of the country.

CHAPTER IV.

To the great delight of the expectant crowd at Panama, the steamship came within the appointed time, but she did not prove to be of sufficient capacity even to take all who were willing to pay the most exorbitant fares for the most limited accommodations.

But Frederick having a "through ticket" for himself, found it easy, by an early application, to secure a steerage berth for his friend, who did not ask for any better place, and who said he would rather swing his hammock under the bow-sprit, than to wait any longer for a passage.

Their voyage was a quick one, and unmarked by any more striking incidents than the many ludicrous annoyances resulting from crowding fifteen hundred people into a space calculated to accommodate less than two-thirds of that number.

Jotham, however, did not allow his time to pass unimproved. Though a steerage passenger, he was to be found in pretty much every part of the ship, conversing with everybody; guessing and calculating a great many things, and asking questions of somebody at the rate of one for every stroke of the piston all the way up to San Francisco.

He said nothing about the "Crushers," but he heard a great deal about other matters connected with the general object of the voyage, and among other things he encountered another shrewd Yankee, almost a counterpart of himself, who had invented a new "Lifter, Separator, and Precipitator," as he grandiloquently styled a little, insignificant-looking machine, for separating gold from its kindred dust.

He had many of these articles for sale, each being pasted over with printed certificates from many unknown generals, judges and clergymen, that they were altogether perfect, and sure to capture the finest particles of the precious metal, not allowing the very aura to escape.

"It precipitates the *hull*," said the vendor, "even that which is too small for gravitation to act on, and which would float in the air like motes in a sunbeam—it precipitates the *hull*."

Jotham's eyes sparkled when he saw the machine, and heard the boasts of its inventor.

"If it is half what he tells," he said, aside to Fred, "it is beyond all value to us." So he began to decry the invention vociferously, insomuch that one might naturally have supposed that he had not the remotest design of becoming a purchaser. But the other party understood him better, and a scene of bantering ensued for about half an hour, well worthy these two representatives of Yankee-dom. It resulted in Jotham beating down the price of

one of the machines something like fifty per cent. below what the other had at first stated to be its actual cost, and then obtaining the privilege of making a trial of it before paying for it—to all of which the vendor consented with the air of a man who knew very well what he was about, and who was quite satisfied with his bargain.

The Vermonter had in his possession a small quantity of gold dust, the proceeds of the fragment of golden granite which he had bought and crushed at Panama, and which he had imperfectly separated by some rude process. This, after first carefully weighing it, he mixed thoroughly with several quarts of scrubbing sand, which he obtained from one of the stewards of the vessel, and then, with Innis, he retired to the state-room of the latter, to make a private experiment with the "Precipitator." The result was a most astonishing confirmation of all that had been claimed in behalf of the machine. Jotham recovered his gold from the myriad grains of baser dust almost to the last precious atom; and both he and Frederick were fully convinced of the great value of the invention.

"We will take it of course," said Innis.

"Sartingly," said Jotham, "and another also. They are beyond all price to us."

Frederick consented, and Jotham went back to his fellow-Yankee.

"I don't think any too much of your machine," he said, with a careless air.

"Don't you! I am sorry for that."

"No, it's rather a queer affair; it may be good for something possibly under some circumstances—that is to say, it is rather better than nothing."

"Yes."

"But I don't know but I might take one or two to sell ag'in, if you'd let 'em go for"—and so forth, and so on.

But the bargain was concluded after much talking and whittling, and after many times turning their backs upon each other, and walking off—and the two machines were bought without any further diminution of their price.

Innis paid for the Precipitators, and Jotham stored them carefully away, and in due time the voyagers arrived at their desired port, and entered the gate of the golden land.

Enthusiasm is always infectious, and Innis had by this time become nearly as sanguine as his Eastern friend in regard to their joint prospects.

His first day in San Francisco was spent in seeking a market for his fancy wares, which he speedily disposed of at a profit equal to his best expectations.

This at once gave him ample funds for all immediate wants, and for expenses of traveling and transportation of necessary freight to any part of the mining region which he might calculate to seek. They spent a few days in the capital, which they employed chiefly in obtaining information in regard to the mines—and Frederick found, to his great satisfaction, that while very many bore testimony to the abundance and richness of the quartz rocks in certain specified locations, all concurred in speaking of the labor bestowed upon them as unremunerative; and very few sought the places where they most abounded.

"We are like to have very few competitors," he said to the Yankee.

"The fewer the better. We don't want no competitors, nor no spectators. But here is a list of things we *do* want," said Jotham, who made no hesitation in calling freely upon his companion for any outlays which he thought requisite to their object.

"What are they?"

"A barrel of sea-biscuits, six kegs of gunpowder, two kegs of rum, two rifles, two six-barrel revolvers, two bowie knives, lead, bullet moulds, &c., &c."

"Why, Jotham, you must intend to open a store."

"No, sir; we shall want all this, and as to so large a quantity of powder, we may have some blasting to do, though I think not much."

"And are we to live on sea-biscuits?"

"With the game and fish which we can obtain there, and very good living it will be, too."

"And how are all these things to be transported?"

"Two good mules and a smallish wagon will do it—slowly."

"But it will take my last dollar."

"What of that? Let it."

"How far shall we probably have to go?"

"Not near so far as you may imagine. I have heard of a place in a wild spot, not eighty miles from here, exactly suited to our purpose, and where we shall be as quiet and unmolested as a frog under a flag-stone. But we will start from here in quite another direction, for I am determined nobody shall know which way we go."

"Do you feel confident that our two Crushers are large enough for valuable service?"

"A plenty, sir, for two individuals. They are all that we can feed any way, and that ought to satisfy us; and if we find the quarter such as it is represented, near the Bottomless Sound, I calculate we can bag about fifty ounces a day."

"Fifty ounces? Impossible!"

"Not at all—rather over than under that mark, I think, but we must take with us materials enough for a small water-wheel."

"And can you *make* the wheel when we get there?"

"Let me alone for that; I can make anything that I have ever seen, if I only have the things to do it with."

"And some things that you have not seen, if we may judge by the 'Crusher,'" replied Innis, laughing.

It will be borne in mind that at the time now spoken of the quartz mining system was as yet unknown in California, and undreamed of, excepting by our Vermont adventurer. No ponderous machines, of ten tons digestive power, had yet been constructed to grind the auriferous rocks for the benefit of the hundreds of members of an incorporated company, who, remaining quietly at home, pocketed the golden returns, without well knowing where California was, or how remote from their comfortable par-

lors and snug counting-houses. Jotham was in every sense an inventor. The idea was original with him; and if it was carried into practice on a limited scale, it was, as he said, large enough for them two.

Innis having so far submitted himself to the guidance of Jotham, did not now draw back. He freely supplied the whole motley bill of wants, and everything was soon in readiness for setting out on their inland journey.

CHAPTER V.

They started with their asinine team, one morning at dawn of day, in a direction nearly opposite to the one which they intended to pursue, having laden their wagon by night to avoid observation, but not leaving any one the right to complain of their clandestine departure. But they had not proceeded far before they discovered that they were not the only early risers in San Francisco; for on looking back from an eminence which they ascended, a few miles from the city, they perceived a horseman about sixty rods behind them, traveling at a moderate pace in the same direction with themselves. A little disturbed at this discovery, Jotham diminished his own already slow progress, for the purpose of allowing the stranger to overtake and pass them, but the latter seemed to manifest no such desire. He came nearly up with them, indeed, and cast many curious glances at their vehicle and its contents, affording at the same time a better view of himself and his equipage.

He was a short, stout, sandy-complexioned man, with a shock of yellow hair, protruding in all directions from beneath a sort of jockey-cap, and resting in matted curls, or rather knots, upon the faded velvet collar of a short frock coat, which seemingly had once been blue, but which retained no definable color. His coat was buttoned to the chin; a soiled cotton cravat covered the spot where a shirt collar ought to have been, and brown linen trousers,

and thick, stiff boots, white with long-dried mud, completed his costume.

His horse was like himself, short, stout and scraggy, and behind him, on his sheepskin saddle, he carried a cylindrical leather valise, very small, and looking not unlike a segment of a kitchen stove-pipe. He was well-armed, a rifle being slung at the side of his steed, and two revolvers and a bowie knife projecting from his belt.

When he had attained a convenient proximity for conversation, Jotham gave him a civil "good morning:" to which he replied with a broad grin, and a silly, good-natured look; but there was a sharp twinkling in a pair of very bright eyes underneath his cap front, which had in them more the expression of a fox than a goose.

"You've got a tough little pony there?" said Jotham, trying to be agreeable, and being unable, without manifest absurdity, to make any nearer approach to a compliment, either to the beast or its rider.

"Yes, pretty tough."

"And fast, too, I darsay?"

The stranger gave another remarkably close and prying look into the wagon, before he replied to the question.

"Yes, pretty fast—want to see him go?"

"Yes; I *should* like to see his paces."

And at the word, the pony, in obedience to some quiet intimation of its master's wishes, started onward at a rapid rate, which it continued without intermission, until both horse and rider disappeared in the distance. Jotham and Innis laughed at the incident as a singular one, but speedily dismissed it from their thoughts—and soon afterwards changed their own route to a course running nearly at right angles with their former direction. Fred thought at one time that he saw the equestrian watching them from a remote point; but as the Yankee could not see him, he concluded he was mistaken.

This hallucination, however, if such it were, returned on the following evening, and also on the third day of their journey—but as Jotham, who was by no means near-

sighted, could in neither instance discern anything like the object which Iunis described, the latter concluded that the yellow-headed savage had taken undue possession of his imagination. Their traveling was slow and toilsome; their wagon was their couch by night, and some sail cloth which they had taken with them to construct a tent in their desert home, was their covering.

Jotham's information in regard to the locality which he sought had been obtained entirely from two miners, who had passed it in returning from a more distant field of labor, and who possibly were the only white people who had ever trod its soil, or bathed in the waters of what, with a traveler's exaggeration, they had called the Bottomless Pond. They had told him as nearly as they could its exact direction from San Francisco, and all the landmarks of streams, hills and woodlands which distinguished the route, and all this information Jotham had carefully written down. The great recommendation of the place in the Vermonter's eyes was the peculiar condition of the quartz rocks, which were to be found there in multitudes of small *boulders*, as well as in a more massive state, and which would rarely require a resort to blasting to render them fit food for his "Crushers." In addition to this, the obscurity of the region rendered it a highly desirable locality for his experiments, and its comparative nearness to the capital was also a favorable circumstance.

"If we can only find it," he said, consulting for the hundredth time his pocket compass and his soiled memorandum. "We cannot be far away from it, if we have kept the right course, for we must have come nearly a hundred miles."

His conjectures proved correct. On the next day they came to a remarkably sinuous stream, which wound like a snake through the landscape and which was the last link in his chain of evidences. It proceeded from, and by following it up, led them to the Bottomless Pond, which proved to be a nearly circular little lake embedded between two mountainous ridges, which partly shielded it from distant observation.

But the conspicuous feature in its scenery was the granite rocks, which not only extended in low ridges for miles along the bases of the hills, but which lay scattered in myriad boulders on every side.

On that very day, before their tent was pitched, or their wagon unladen, did the eager adventurers put up their largest crushing machine, and make their first experiment, and with a completeness of success which astonished even the enthusiastic Yankee himself.

"We've hit it, *we* have!" he said, emphatically, after gloating for some time over the "precipitated" dust from his first "smashings," as he called the powdered rock. "There ain't any mistake about it, Mr. Innis. This here dust, which we have got by ten minutes' labor, would pay our bill to-night at the best hotel in New York, including champagne and oysters."

"That's a fact," said Fred, no less elated, and scarcely able to keep himself on the ground by reason of his elasticity of spirits; "but it won't buy us a supper here, Mr. Wakely, and I am feeling as if I could almost digest a boulder myself. What is there left to eat?"

"Plenty of biscuit and a little cold ham, and whisky and water to wash it down with. What do you want better than that?"

"That will do very well for a hungry man."

"Fall to then—the table is set," said Jotham, opening the provision bag on the wagon seat, and Innis waited no second bidding.

"When this ham is quite gone," said Fred, "we shall have to shoot some of these inquisitive deer around here, which come and stare at us so coolly, scarcely beyond pistol shot. See that fellow peeping over the hillock there at us. Suppose I pop him over now, just to teach him better manners."

"Not now, Mr. Innis, if you please. I fear it would be a bad omen to shed blood here, on the very day of our arrival; besides, there is no time to dress him. Let us wait till it becomes necessary."

After finishing their meal they emptied their wagon of

most of its contents, in order that it might more easily subserve the purpose of a couch, and then commenced setting up their tent in a circular form around it. They were provided with axes, with which they cut poles for this purpose from a neighboring woodland, and ere the sun went down the work was far advanced. The fore part of the following day was devoted to the completion of their cloth house, and the storing away within it of a portion of their stores, after which Jotham set himself about constructing the water-wheel, which was to turn his Crushers. He worked vigorously and handily at everything he took hold of, and with some awkward and bungling assistance from Innis, all was in due time completed. The inlet of the pond was a creek of respectable dimensions, and had some natural falls which required but little aid of dams to give them the small water-power required. Beside one of these the Crushers were duly established, and set at work, grinding out their golden grist, Innis and Jotham finding full employment in selecting the stones and feeding the machines. Jotham flew around as if he was set in motion by the machinery, and with scarcely less clatter. Now shouting encouragement to the "Crushers," and bidding them go ahead and keep lively; and now iterating his "I told you so's," to Innis, and occasionally dealing him a slap of congratulation which fairly staggered him. They both looked forward with the greatest interest to the result of their first day's experiment, and everything gave promise of a success brilliant beyond all their expectations. Their plan of labor was to stop their machines early enough every afternoon to allow time to separate all the gold on the same day, and, accordingly, after ten hours of occasionally interrupted labor, the "Crushers" were allowed to repose at about five o'clock, and the Separators were brought into play. Several hours more of assiduous work completed their task, and placed before them the glittering proofs of the vast and speedy fortune which was at their command. More than fifty ounces of pure gold rewarded their day's labor, and they were astonished to find that they had pulverised probably not less

than millions of the rocks. They little dreamed that the time would come, within two short years, when mammoth "Crushers" would open their devouring jaws around the same devoted ledges, and devour them at the rate of five tons to the hour all the day long, and all the seasons through.

They secured their treasure, and retired to rest and golden dreams. But Innis awoke on the ensuing morning with painful proofs of over-fatigue at his laborious task. His spirits, however, were buoyant, and he resolved not to be daunted by the labor, which he knew would seem lighter as he became more accustomed to it.

They prepared their early meal, but while they were partaking of it they were alarmed at the sound of a galloping horse, and almost before they could rise to their feet, a face was protruded through the doorway of their tent, and a pair of huge, greenish-grey eyes peered in upon them, which they at once recognized as belonging to their singular companion of the road.

"Want to hire?" he drawled out, as he gradually brought his whole body inside the tent, and part of his horse's head, the bridle being thrown over his left arm.

There was such a stupid, dull look about the visitor's face, and he showed such a powerful muscular frame, that the idea of his great utility at once flashed upon the mind of Jotham, who was himself aching with the over-exertion of the preceding day.

"Don't know," answered the Yankee. "Come in, but leave your horse outside. What can you do?"

The stranger fastened his horse without, and then re-entered the tent.

"What can you do?" repeated Jotham.

"Anything."

"How many hours a day?"

"Sixteen."

"What do you ask?"

"Half an ounce and found."

Jotham would not have objected to the price, had he not been anxious to keep the savage in ignorance of the

extreme profitableness of their business, lest it might lead to injurious competition, or some other disastrous result.

"Half an ounce?" he exclaimed. "Why, you'd better go home and go to Congress—that's jest member of Congress pay, that is."

"Tain't too much for me and my horse."

"I'll tell you what, we'll give you a quarter ounce, and if we have good luck, after the first week, it shall be a half. What say you to that?"

"Agreed."

"But you must work hard, for that is great pay."

"You'll see."

The stranger breakfasted, and was at once set at his task, which he entered upon with much energy, and continued to prosecute faithfully through the day, to the great relief of both Jotham and Innis, who attended to one machine at alternate hours, while their *employee* took exclusive charge of the other. The separating process was managed by the proprietors alone, who carefully concealed from the stranger the amount of their gains; but he manifested no curiosity on the subject, and continued steadily at his work, like Samson at his mill.

"We must have got more than three ounces to-day," said Jotham to Innis, in the hearing of the workman, after depositing between four and five pounds' weight of the dust in the place of concealment.

"Doubtless," replied Innis.

Hercules, as Fred had christened the stranger, expressed no surprise, but stared stupidly at his employer.

"If it keeps on as well as that, I'm to have half an ounce you know."

"Certainly."

And it did keep on as well as it had begun. Daily did Jotham and Innis store away their thousand dollars or more of treasure, and nightly did they retire to rest joyous and elated with their prosperity for many successive weeks.

Hercules continued to be a most valuable auxiliary, but

not a companion. He never talked but about his pay, or at times to praise his horse, which seemed as strong and as stupid as himself; for Wolf, as the shaggy pony was called, was at times employed to draw rocks, on a sort of sled or hurdle, to the machines. At times, too, Fred honored the brute by riding him on a hunting excursion, on which occasions he was sometimes surprised by a sudden and vicious display of fire and mettle on the part of the animal, which, joined to its extreme strength, rendered it not a little difficult to manage.

CHAPTER VI.

Two months had passed by, and the accumulated treasure of the adventurers was already very large, when one night Innis, who was a light sleeper, was awakened at midnight by a slight noise outside the tent.

He listened for some minutes, and hearing no repetition of the sound, was about resuming his slumbers, when he distinctly heard the step of a horse near the doorway. Knowing that Wolf's grazing ground was at some distance from the tent, he was a little surprised at this circumstance, and he immediately arose, went silently to the door-way, and looked out. It was a cloudy night, but there was enough of light to render objects visible at a short distance, and Innis at once perceived, very near the side of the tent, and but a few yards distant from the entrance, both a horse and man, the outlines of which he thought corresponded to the figures of Hercules and Wolf. Fred, with fearful suspicions, stepped quickly to the bell of the workman, which he found vacant, and then he carefully and hastily awoke Jotham, who was deeply enshrouded in sleep, and could with difficulty be made either to keep silent, or to comprehend what was the matter.

As soon, however, as he did understand the nature of the disturbance, he sprang for his rifle, but it had been re-

moved, and Innis, to his astonishment, now found that his gun was also gone.

"He is trying to rob us, without doubt," whispered Jotham, as he hastily dressed himself.

"He has already done it," replied Innis, returning from the place where the gold had been kept. "The bags are gone."

"We have our pistols left, and we are two to one," said Jotham. "Come!"

He hurried to the doorway as he spoke, followed by Innis, each pistol in hand, but already the laden beast, led by its master, was departing on a fast walk. The dust had been kept in a considerable number of the small, strong bags which are usually provided by the miners for that purpose, holding only a few quarts each, and these had been placed by the robber in a large bag, which he had securely fastened upon the horse by means of a belt.

"These things ain't of any use in the dark," whispered Jotham, thrusting his pistol in his belt. "Follow me, now, like a catamount, or all is lost."

As the Yankee spoke, he sprang forward, almost with the impetuosity of the animal he had named, and before the well-armed robber, who heard his approach, could bring any weapon to bear upon him, the agile Jotham was upon his back, with his hands clenched, talon-like, into his throat, and shouting to Innis to come on.

Fred, who was scarcely behind his friend, at once threw his arms around the ruffian, with a view of pinioning him, and preventing his using his weapons; but the giant at the same instant sprang furiously forward, and threw himself and his assailants together upon the ground. The shock disengaged the hold of Jotham, and before he could renew it, Hercules rolled rapidly over several times, sprang to his feet, and darted off, followed by his steed, and in another minute man and beast, and fifty thousand dollars of treasure, had disappeared in the surrounding gloom.

Innis and Jotham immediately gave chase, with the energy of desperation, but there was scarcely any light to

direct them, and they were unarmed, excepting with their revolvers and knives. For a while they kept within hearing of the fugitive horse, the noise of whose clattering hoofs guided them in the pursuit, and they were in momentary expectation that the beast, which they supposed had not effected a union with its master, would slacken its pace and allow them to come up with him. But they underrated the sagacity of Wolf, who continued to dash forward as if fully conscious of the part which he was taking in his master's financial transactions. His course was along the outlet of the lake, over an open, prairie-like plain, and nearly in the direction which the adventurers had come on the last day of their travel toward the Bottomless Pond. Every minute the noise of his progress grew fainter on the ears of the pursuers, at times entirely ceasing, as a softer road was gained, and then again growing more distinct as the flying hoofs struck the pebbled strand.

But as one sense failed them, another came to their aid, for at length the parting clouds allowed the moonlight to fall upon the landscape, and the quick eye of Innis at once discovered the riderless horse about sixty rods in advance. He was progressing with unabated speed.

"The brute goes as if he was possessed with an evil spirit," said Fred.

"Blam'd if I ain't afraid it's Belzebub, himself," said Jotham, panting as he spoke, but not slackening his pace. "Didn't you see how his eyes shone like balls of fire, jest afore he started off? Perhaps Hercules, there, has 'sold himself,' and this here gold is the price that he gets—who knows?"

"The old fellow must be hard up," replied Innis, laughing, "if he can't raise money without working for it in the mines, and then carrying off two hundred weight on his back."

"Better work in the mines than in hot brimstone. Just see how he goes! How could he have sense enough to run like that if he was only a common horse?"

Wolf was at this moment ascending a slight eminence,

and his speed seemed rather increased than diminished by the obstacle; and Innis could not himself refrain from wondering what influence could be acting upon the animal to impel him thus frantically forward so long after his temporary fright must have subsided.

The darkness, the wildness of the landscape, the remarkable character of the events through which he had recently passed, and the strange aspect and conduct of both Hercules and his steed, gave weight to the words of Jotham, and began to awaken in the heart of Innis some long dormant superstitions, which had been implanted in childhood, and which the light of mature intellect had concealed without eradicating. It required, however, but a slight effort to shake off from his mind this impression, and he hastened to dispel it also from that of his companion, lest he should relax his efforts under the belief that they must prove futile.

Wolf, in the meantime, had attained the summit of the little hill, where he was for awhile more plainly seen in relief against the sky, but soon afterwards he disappeared from view as he descended on the opposite side. Scarcely a minute afterwards, however, the burly figure of Hercules, before unobserved, was seen toiling up the ascent, and disappearing in turn over the summit, rendering it probable that his proximity to the horse had been all the while sufficient to admit of urging him forward with his voice. This sight fired the Yankee with a vehement indignation which overcame the last remnant of his superstitious fears, and seemed to impart to him renewed strength and activity. But, alas, no energy could avail to lessen the distance between the pursuers and the treasure-laden steed, or even to prevent its being increased, as long as the latter continued his present rate of progress, for although his motion was not exceedingly rapid, it was far beyond human competition for any prolonged period. Even Hercules, who was greatly in advance of the young men, was continually losing ground in comparison with his steed, although the animal was not beyond the reach of his voice, and would probably have instantly stopped at his

command. It was probable, indeed, that so far from making any effort to stop him, he was continually urging him forward. When the pursuers had in their turn gained the top of the hill, the horse was no longer visible, and Hercules was standing still about sixty rods in advance of them, apparently waiting to see if they continued the chase. The event proved that he was also waiting for a very different purpose, for no sooner were the figures of the young men brought in relief between him and the sky than Innis, whose sight was remarkably acute, perceived the ruffian raising his rifle and levelling it at them. He had barely time to exclaim, "Down! down! he is going to fire!" and to throw himself upon the ground, when the flash was seen and the report heard, and the whizzing bullet went flying past them, not a little frightening Jotham, who had not had time to follow his friend's example.

"Darn his pieter!" exclaimed the Yankee. "Come on, now! He ain't loaded. Come on!" and he dashed down the hill, followed by Innis. Hercules did not await their coming, but again started off on a run, maintaining his advantage of distance, though not apparently increasing it.

"We'll have him," said Jotham, putting out the words as he leaped rapidly along. "He can't hold out forever at this rate."

"Nor we either," said Fred.

"I can. I am as long winded as a locomotive!"

"We must not give him time to reload his rifle."

"No; the murderous villain!"

A chase of half a mile had ensued when the steed again came in view, now in his turn standing still, probably in obedience to some call of his master, and awaiting his coming up. To the dismay of the pursuers, Hercules threw himself upon the pony, which, although so heavily laden, started off without apparent effort at quite his former pace.

Hoping to see the wearied beast falter under his great load, the young men continued, though with failing courage, to press forward; but doubt gave way to discouragement.

ment, and discouragement to despair, as they found themselves rapidly falling behind their gold, and still saw no sign of diminution in the speed at which it was departing. Soon the horse and its rider entirely disappeared in the distance, but still they ran on stopping occasionally for a minute to regain breath and strength, until day dawned, without revealing to them, as they had anticipated, a sight of their enemy, and seemed to leave them no further ground for hope. But they decided, on consultation, to go on. The tracks of the steed were distinctly visible in the sandy soil, and as long as they had this clue to the direction of the robber, they resolved not to abandon the chase.

About sunrise they saw before them, at the distance of a few miles, another hill of considerable height, the summit of which they supposed must command an extensive view, and might enable them again to get sight of the fugitive.

They were not mistaken in their calculations, and when they reached the height they saw the robber scarcely two miles in advance of them, proceeding at a very moderate pace, while still further on, and moving in the opposite direction, was a considerable party of men, with one or more teams and wagons. The appearance of this cavalcade had, doubtless, been the cause of Hercules lessening his speed, lest he should assume the appearance of a fugitive and be stopped, and he probably believed that he had so far distanced the two young men as to be in no immediate danger from them, if they had not, as he hoped, altogether given up the pursuit.

Hope now revived in the breasts of Innis and Jotham, and although both were nearly exhausted, they still ran on with no little velocity, Hercules, in the meantime, plodding slowly onward with a careless and easy air. He knew enough of the general character of the mining population to feel assured that if unsuspected as a thief, he would not be molested by the party he was about to meet, for in that lawless region every individual, even though not punctili-

ously honest, feels that he best consults his own safety by fostering a sacred regard for individual rights.

But it was a matter of course that the robber would not proceed far without looking to see if he were pursued, and when at length he did so, sudden doubt and irresolution seemed to take possession of his mind. He at first entirely stopped his progress, then went slowly forward. His pursuers were about a mile and a half behind him, and the other party less than half that distance in front, and if he did not escape before their union was effected, his capture was almost certain. This conviction seemed at length to take possession of his mind, for after a few rods progress, he turned his horse's head to the south, and started off at a rapid pace.

Innis and Jotham, instead of directly following him, hastened to meet the strangers and communicate to them the true character of the fugitive, and the great value of the booty which he was bearing away.

CHAPTER VII.

There were eight men in the party, all of whom were miners returning to their diggings from San Francisco, where they had been to dispose of their gold dust, and to procure supplies.

No sooner did they learn the state of affairs than all who were mounted, to the number of four, set off with a loud hurrah in pursuit, and on a rapid gallop, while Innis and Jotham, as before, could only follow on foot. Hercules had a very considerable start, and his extraordinary horse seemed to have been husbanding his powers for this final hour of need, such tremendous and telling exertions did he now make. But they were on a very extended, open plain, which afforded no shelter nor turning place to the fugitive for many miles, and it soon became apparent that with the heavy load which Wolf carried, he could not long maintain his advance, which was soon indeed lessened to

about half a mile. The miners were all armed with rifles, and appeared like resolute and determined men, and they continued to send forth, at intervals of a few minutes, a repetition of the charging shout with which they had set out on the chase, with a view of intimidating the robber. Hercules, however, was not easily scared, and was probably accustomed to perilous situations. The miners continued to gain upon him, and when the half mile interval was reduced to a quarter, one of them, a tall, lithe Kentuckian, who was considerably ahead of his companions, drew his rein, and raising his rifle, took deliberate aim, and fired at the fugitive. The shot proved harmless, and received no notice whatever from Hercules; but when it was repeated at a nearer interval, the latter stopped, and it at once became apparent that he was about to return the compliment. Three of the men were, unfortunately, near together, affording with their horses a wide mark for the practiced eye of the ruffian, who sent a bullet into the midst of the group, which lodged in the shoulder of one of the party, inflicting a painful but not serious wound. Rage now took possession of the minds of the pursuers, who pressed more furiously forward, fully resolved not to allow the robber an opportunity of reloading his weapon, and the fate of Hercules soon became so desperate that he drew his knife, and cutting the belt which bound the bag of gold to his horse, allowed the whole treasure to fall to the earth.

A shout from the miners greeted this triumph, but if the robber had calculated on the gold being accepted as a peace offering he was mistaken, for the whole party dashed past the rich prize with scarcely a glance at it, and continued the chase.

Wolf, lightened of so great a part of his load, began to increase his pace, when the Kentuckian ordered a halt.

"Give him a broadside!" he shouted, "and aim at the pony." His own gun was unloaded, and snatching that of his wounded companion, the three men fired together. When it is said that the distance was about forty

rods, the target a horse, and two of the marksmen Kentuckians, the result need scarcely be related.

Wolf staggered, plunged and fell, and his rider, desperate and frantic, gained his feet, and turning to face his pursuers, awaited their coming, with a pistol in each hand. The miners halted a little beyond pistol shot, and quickly reloaded their rifles, when the one who had acted as their leader presented his weapon, and called out to the ruffian to surrender.

"What will ye do with me?" doggedly asked Hercules.

"I will give you to the crows in just one minute, if you don't," said Kentucky, taking out his watch.

"Will you agree to send me to San Francisco to be tried?"

"I will send you somewhere in just thirty seconds," said the other, bringing his rifle to his eye, and perfecting his aim.

There was no help for it, and Hercules threw his pistols upon the ground, when the whole party immediately rushed up, took from him his knives, and bound his hands securely together.

He made but one attempt at self-exculpation, and in doing so condemned himself by his own words.

"It was as much mine as theirs!" he said.

"*As much?* Then you at least stole half of it, by your own confession."

He was conducted back to the spot where the miners had left their companions and the wagon, and of course the recovered treasure was not left behind.

"How long will it take to try this man?" said Kentucky the first.

"Our horses need half an hour to rest," replied a Mississippian.

"I should think that ought to be enough."

"And too much, for there'll be something to be done after trial, probably, and if we don't look sharp we shall lose a hull hour more in this business, when every one knows we ought to be moving."

"Very true."

"There is just nine of us here, besides the witnesses. I nominate Mr. Beldon, there, for Judge. He's been judge at the horse-races many a time, and he's qualified."

The motion was put and carried.

"I'll be prosecuting 'torney, or prisoner's counsel, I don't care a chaw of tobacker which, and Mr. Meek shall be counsel on the other side. Then there is just six of you left for jurors. What say you to that?"

It was agreed to.

"Now, Mr. Meek, I'll toss up with you who shall be who. Heads, district attorney—tails, prisoner's attorney. Heads it is! I'm the prosecutor. Is the court ready?"

"All ready."

"Gentlemen, this man is a thief. He stole a bag of gold, and he has admitted it. Besides, we can prove it. Let the witnesses step forward."

Jotham came, and was sworn, with some show of solemnity, to tell the truth, which he did with very little circumlocution.

Innis was called, but declined testifying, and protested earnestly against the whole proceeding, offering to be at the trouble and expense of conducting the prisoner to San Francisco, to be tried and punished according to law, but he was overruled, and put down clamorously by judge, jury, and counsel on both sides.

"We can do without his testimony," said the prosecutor.

"So we can," said the prisoner's counsel.

"What say you, gentlemen of the jury, guilty or not guilty?" asked the former.

"Wait a little," said Mr. Meek, "how do you know, but we have a defence? Hallo, there, carrot-head, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"It was as much mine as theirs. I worked hardest for it."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"No; if you ain't fools you'll go and get their 'Crushers.' I can show you the way, and you can all make

your fortunes in six months. They shell out a thousand dollars a day, and there is enough for all—them too," pointing to Jotham and Innis. "Come, don't be silly, now. We can all go into partnership."

"Is that all you have to say? Haven't you got any witnesses?"

"I have witnesses enough to my good character, if you'll give me a chance to call them."

"Call away."

"But they ain't here. I don't carry them about with me."

"You had better, though. Such a man as you might very often have need of them."

"The horses are done eating," said the judge, "and it is time the trial is over—we ought to be moving."

"Well, gentlemen, the prisoner has no witnesses, and there isn't any time to make speeches. You have heard what he has to say for himself. Are you ready to give your verdict?"

The jurors exchanged a few words, and one said they were ready.

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!"

"Then the judge will pass the sentence, if he pleases. Jackson, jest pick up a rope, will you, so that we don't lose so much time. You ain't wanted any longer on the jury."

"I ain't any speech-maker," said the judge—"the man is convicted of theft, and by the laws of the mines he must die."

"I sentence him to be hung—instanter, and Smith, if you hadn't been a spooney, you'd have shot him when you fired at him an hour ago, and saved us all this trouble. Go ahead."

The rope was ready, and before the man well knew whether he was convicted or not, the noose was around his neck, and he was dragged back toward the wagon, the pole of which, fixed erect, was to serve for a gallows, there being no tree within sight.

Innis again interfered, and sought earnestly to prevent the tragedy; but he could not effect anything. The prisoner himself did not beg. There was a baleful fire in his eye, which indicated that his thoughts were on another subject; and as he passed toward the wagon, he suddenly snatched a pistol from the belt of one of his conductors, and fired it at the Kentuckian, who had been the chief cause of his capture. His ball missed its mark, but brought a speedy termination to his own misery, and saved a revolting scene, for quick as thought the rifle of the assaulted man was levelled, and its bullet went crashing through the head of the robber.

"He was too near for a good mark," said Kentucky, coolly—proceeding to re-load his gun, without stirring from his tracks.

"He was game though, wasn't he?"

"He wasn't nothing else," said Mississippi.

"Come, let us be off," said the judge.

Innis was sick at heart at the terrible scene which he had witnessed; but he was convinced that however improper the execution of Hercules might have been, the wretch fully deserved his fate, and the safety of the mining population might be said almost to require it. There was no longer a doubt on his mind that his recent crime had been long premeditated, and indeed that he had followed and sought employment with himself and Jotham for no other purpose—all his seeming dullness and stupidity having been feigned for the furtherance of his object. The miners made immediate preparations to depart, and so far from molesting the treasure of the young men, they did not even ask a compensation for their great services in recovering it. They did not, however, refuse it when it was urged upon them, and about a thousand dollars' worth of the dust was divided among them by Innis and Jotham, the tall Kentuckian receiving a double portion.

"We don't want your money," he said, pouring it into his bullet pouch—"but we'll take it just to remember you by."

Fifty ounces more were paid by Jotham and Innis to

the owners of two of the best horses in the company, in exchange for their animals, which they were greatly delighted to obtain even at that high price. The miners departed without manifesting any curiosity as to the location of the rich diggings of the young men, or showing any disposition to trespass upon them, seeming to exercise a punctilious honor in this particular. Jotham and Innis remained to bury the slain man, and then returned at their leisure to their sylvan home.

For several weeks after these exciting events they continued to prosecute their labor alone, and although with rich returns, yet not without a constant fatigue of body, which they feared might, if long continued, produce serious results.

Their treasure had also become so large, that with the recent example of its insecurity in their minds, they did not deem it prudent to expose it longer to the dangers of the desert, and they resolved to return to San Francisco, both for the purpose of disposing of their gold, and of procuring assistants at their work. They took down their tent, and concealed its materials, together with their "Crushers" in the earth, and allowed their mules their liberty—pretty certain of finding them somewhere in the vicinity of the Pond on their return, and nearly indifferent whether they did so or not. Their numerous little sacks of gold they placed in other and larger bags, taking care to fill the mouths of each of these with other materials, and also arranging them in the wagon in such a way that they would serve for seats, and might easily be shielded from observation. Their new team was fresh and strong, and their journey back to the capital, although attended with hourly solicitude, was effected without harm or loss, in less than half the time which had been before consumed in traveling it.

They found a ready and good market for their dust, which they immediately sold, and, under the advice of some judicious capitalists, they invested the greater part of their money in real estate, in a part of the town which they deemed certain of augmenting many-fold in value if

the immigration continued long as it had begun. The remainder of their capital they left in the hands of reliable bankers, and having procured at a high salary the services of two strong laboring men, whose fidelity was well vouched for, they prepared to set out on their return.

Though some asked, it may well be supposed that none learned from either Jotham or Innis their location, or the process by which they acquired their gold, and there were so many, and such continual rumors of rich discoveries in every direction, and so many cases of signal success, that no one instance long occupied the public attention.

"Are you in the wet diggings?" one would ask of Jotham, anxious to get some clue to his whereabouts.

"Yes—wettish, rather, there is a good deal of water about there."

"Are you in the *dry diggings*, Mr. Wakely?" another would ask.

"Y-e-s——dryish——rather, particularly when it don't rain."

"A long way from here I reckon?"

"Yes—a good bit."

"North—I s'pose?"

"Yes—northish——rather—a part of the way."

But few knew the extent of their success, and as the time of their second departure was kept secret, there was little difficulty in getting off unobserved, or at all events unmolested.

Two more horses, tough and rugged little animals, had been purchased for their followers, who were sent in advance, with directions for the first half day's journey, in order to diminish the chances of attracting attention to their movements.

"We'll follow on ahead," said Terence O'Grady, a bold, stout "boy" of thirty, who was one of the "hands," as Jotham called his employees, and whose laughing, honest face, seemed a better guaranty of fidelity than the "first-rate character" which he brought from Brown, Snithers & Co., of the golden city, whose notes he held for over a thousand dollars of his savings.

Terence had been in the mines—had been through all manner of rough experiences, and had been content to subside into the position of a hired man with day wages rather more than equivalent to a month's earnings in "ould Ireland."

"It's a hired man I was born sure," he said, "and why should I be gittin' above my business?"

His colleague, Nick Doyle, was an ex-soldier who had been in the Mexican war, had belonged to a corps of sharp-shooters, and who still carried a rifle with which he had brought down an officer at eighty rods, by shooting him through a field-glass with which he was surveying the Yankee forces. "The ball crushed through the spy-glass—through his eye, and through the back of his head," said Nick, "as we heard after the battle was won—and it spoiled the whole concern."

Nick was a Southern Ohioan, of about thirty-five years, stoutish, with black hair and eyes, too fond of his pipe and whiskey, but honest, tractable and obedient, and quite a stranger to fear of any kind, excepting the fear of short rations. He always addressed Innis as Captain.

The journey back to the Bottomless Pond was a fatiguing one of four days duration, for the weather was very warm, and the wagon was heavily laden with a miscellaneous assortment of stores. The capitalists felt at liberty to indulge in some luxuries now, and they had provided themselves with many comforts of which they had sorely felt the need during their first sojourn in their Crusoe-like solitude.

But they arrived in safety, and without serious mishap, and found everything as they had left it, with the exception of the mules, which had strayed to parts unknown, and were not inquired after.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was now about the middle of August. No time was lost in unearthing the "Crushers" and other implements, together with the canvas walls of their tent, and everything was in readiness, in a day or two, for renewed op-

rations. Materials for a new tent for the laborers had been brought with them, and this was erected a few feet distant from that of Innis and Wakely.

Work was resumed; the golden harvest again poured in more profusely than before, and for a period of nearly three months there was little abatement of their wonderful success.

No secrecy was now observed: the new workmen were made small share-holders in the concern, and were themselves acquiring what they regarded as wealth, and once a week the accumulated treasures were buried in ingeniously constructed *caches*, at some distance from the tents, where they would probably have remained undiscovered for years, if any stress of danger had driven the miners suddenly from their post.

We have said that they were provided with many comforts and even luxuries; and Terence, who was a tolerable cook, and learned rapidly by practice, served up their savory meals acceptably, being excused from harder labor a few hours each day for this purpose.

Fresh meat, indeed, was scarce, for the deer and antelopes which had scarcely run away from them on their first advent into this wilderness, had grown shy after one or two raids had been made upon them, and had retreated up the wooded hills, where it was thought imprudent to pursue them.

But when their bacon and jerked beef was consumed, they began to feel the want of some heartier food than "hard tack," and the few small fish which they were enabled, with much labor and waste of time, to take from the lake. True, the tea and coffee which they now had in abundance, went far to mend their deficient meals, and their Killikieck was a solace after the day's labor, but these things did not "make muscle," and that was certainly what these hard-working men required.

So it was decided, one bright November morning, that Mr. Innis and Nick Doyle should go on foot up the mountain in pursuit of game (the ascent was too steep for

horses), exercising the utmost wariness in their movements, and that in case of any pursuit, (which was believed most improbable,) they should retreat by a circuitous route, and only return to the tents after it was quite dark, when no outlying foe could see them.

"Touch your guns off aisy," said Terence, "and don't be making too much noise wid 'em. If it was me that you'd sind now, I'd rin the deer down, and ketch 'em by the horns, I would, and make no noise at all."

"You shall go next time, Terry," said Fred, as he and Nick went gaily forth, fording the shallow inlet, whence they directed their course towards the hills on the opposite side of the little lake. There was no particular reason for preferring that side of the valley, excepting that, all the way up the acclivity, it commanded a view of the home which they had left.

The ascent, now gradual, and now so precipitous as to be overcome only by clinging to boughs and bushes, rose to a height of nearly three hundred feet, and might, without much license of speech, be styled a mountain, and they saw nothing which tempted them to fire a gun, until they had reached its summit.

A few rabbits and squirrels, indeed, crossed their path; there were some partridges on the logs, and many pigeons in the trees—and now and then a majestic eagle, swooping down from the clouds, found his prey on the forest tops, and flew away with it, screaming, in his relentless talons.

It was hard for the sportsmen to refrain from shooting, but they had resolved not to awaken the echoes unnecessarily, and they passed on panting and climbing to the top.

Here their forbearance was soon rewarded—for they had not gone half a mile along the crest of the hill before they discovered a herd of five deer, led by a many-pronged stag, browsing quietly off the bushes, at a distance of about fifty rods from the slope.

They dropped to the ground to consult how they might best approach them, for though Nick protested that he want-

ed no better shot than from where he stood, Innis, less experienced, insisted on getting nearer, that he might make more sure of his aim. They crept on hands and feet a dozen or fifteen rods without startling the animals, and then Fred yielded to the most violent gesticulations and head-shakings of his companion, and consented to make the trial without going further.

"I'll take the stag, Captain," whispered Nick, "and you may take your choice of the does—hey?"

Innis nodded assent, but as they rose to fire, the animals threw up their heads, and before the rifles could be brought to bear, they were all in rapid motion.

Two quick reports followed, but with no visible effect, except to increase the speed of the herd, who now darted forward like the wind, while the mortified hunters hastily reloaded their weapons, and then followed on the run.

"It was my fault, I know," said Fred, who saw the vexed look of his companion; "but I longed for the hour of bringing down a deer, and they were too far for me at first."

"We'll have them yet," said Nick, propitiated now. "I reckon that stag is hit near the left shoulder, but a little too high to do much harm—but we'll see."

The chase was continued with varying hopes and doubts for about three miles, without catching more than occasional and distant glimpses of the herd through the trees, and the pursuers, treading lightly, and avoiding all crackling bushes, believed themselves unseen and unheard by the game, whose alarm at length abated, their speed subsiding gradually, until they were again walking and browsing as before.

At sixty rods Nick begged permission to fire, promising certain success, and Fred consenting now, of course, also took aim, and the rifles rang as before almost simultaneously.

The stag dropped; the herd fled, and Nick, proceeding to reload before quitting his tracks, replied to the congratulations of Innis by saying:

"I'll show you the other bullet-mark now That's what I wanted him for chiefly."

"Don't be too sure," replied Fred.

"If it ain't there, I agree not to taste the venison," said Doyle, confidently.

They hastened to the stag, which was yet alive and struggling, and having dispatched it, the sharpshooter pointed in triumph to the two wounds.

"This was what brought him down," he said, pointing to the lower bullet hole. "Clus to the heart you see. That's the place to hit 'em. Where did you aim, Captain?"

Fred laughed.

"Why, I aimed at two or three of them in a huddle," he said. "I thought I must hit one."

"Like enough you did," replied the other, proceeding to skin the stag, "there's many places you can hit an animal without bringing him down. Always aim at the vitals, Cap'tain, and don't try to kill but one deer at a time."

Though this was said soberly, Fred knew his "hand" was making fun of him, but he took it in good part, and began to assist in the flaying operation.

When the animal was skinned and quartered, half of it was enveloped in his hide, and deposited in the crotch of a tree, where it would be tolerably safe from beasts of prey, until they could return for it the next day. The two hind quarters Fred and Nick believed they could easily carry home, after first fortifying themselves with a hearty meal, and for this purpose they proceeded to cut two large, juicy steaks from one of the haunches before them.

A fire was kindled, and these were cooked after a fashion known to the ex-soldier, and were eaten, unseasoned, by the hungry hunters, with a relish unknown in lands of civilization and plenty.

"We cut them too small," said Nick, as he smacked his lips over the last mouthful.

"Fact," replied Fred, laughing. "Let's try it over."

CHAPTER IX.

Doyle hastened to gather fuel to replenish their failing fire—when a crackling in the bushes behind them was heard, and a very hungry-looking “diner-out” made his appearance, in the shape of a ferocious grizzly bear.

He was so near when discovered, and was advancing on such a rapid trot, and with such evidently hostile intent, that nothing remained for the hunters but to take to the nearest trees.

“*Up! up!*” shouted Nick, suiting the action to the word, and clambering, squirrel-like, up a moderate-sized maple, the trunk of which was about twice the size of his own body.

Innis was standing near the tree in which the fore-quarters of the stag had been placed. He hesitated a breath—to see if he could recover his gun, which stood against an adjoining oak, but the danger was too close and too imminent, and he, too, “went up”—and was scarcely in the lowest fork of the tree before the monster was bellying at its base, with snout upraised toward him.

“This is a pretty kittle of fish,” said Doyle, from his tree, for the two were within easy talking distance.

Innis, who had been a little nearer the monster’s jaws than the other, was yet too excited for words, but he busied himself in trying to secure the venison from falling, for he had nearly displaced it in climbing.

“He has enough for a good meal down there, I’m sure,” he said, after awhile: “Perhaps he will eat, and go away content.”

Bruin was not long in finding the hind-quarters of the stag, which lay invitingly upon the ground before him, and he attacked them with a voracity which, for awhile, seemed to render him oblivious of everything else.

Nick instantly began to descend—but when Innis saw his design, he called quickly to him to desist.

“Hist! we must have the guns,” was the low reply.

Fred still protested. The danger was too fearful.

"But I *must*," said the brave fellow. "He'll keep us treed here all day and all night, till we drop into his jaws. I know what a grizzly is."

"Let *me* go then. I'm nearest to the gun."

"Stay where you are," replied Nick, continuing slowly to descend on the side of the tree most remote from the beast, "if he looks this way tell me."

Bruin did not—but at this moment, pausing in his meal, he raised his head high, and uttered a long howl, after which he resumed his work more ravenously, as if to make up for lost time.

"He is calling for his mate," said Innis, who knew something of the habits of these animals. "Be careful, Nick!"

Nick's feet were on the ground, and he was peering around the trunk which interposed between him and the beast, when a crash in the bushes was heard, followed by a howl of recognition, and another bear, nearly as large as the first, came rushing into the arena.

"Back, Nick—back! or you are lost!" shouted Fred—but the Ohioan needed no warning. His faculties were all sharpened to the utmost, and he was already clambering back into the tree, at the first note of this new danger.

"This is gittin' a little too serious, Captain!" he said, after regaining his elevated post.

"Rather," replied Fred, trying to keep calm.

The gluttonous quadruped, although considerate enough to call his mate to his luscious repast, had left very little for her to eat. Two-thirds of the dinner was devoured before she came, after which there was a brisk competition between the two, to see who should get most of what remained.

The appetite of the female was thus only fully aroused when the meat was gone, and licking her red chops, she looked into the face of her companion, and thence (guided by his upward gaze) into the trees, where, for the first time, she discovered the human game.

Rendered furious by the sight, she ran from one tree to the other, growling terrifically, and ever and anon standing up on her hind-legs, and scratching the bark from the trunks with a ferocity dreadful to behold.

"*That's* no use," said Nick, coolly. "You can't get up here you know, which is mighty fortinet for us."

The other animal, less demonstrative, looked lazily up into the trees, and contented himself with an occasional growl.

"I'll throw down the other half of the deer," said Fred. "When they have eaten that, perhaps they will go away contented. What do you say?"

"Hold on, Captain. Let's see first if they don't go without. This baitin' on 'em may have a bad effect, and keep 'em around here all day."

They waited patiently nearly an hour, but still the animals raged and howled below, passing to and fro between the two trees, and occasionally clasping and shaking the smallest of them (Nick's maple) until its upper boughs could be seen to sway with the motion.

"Shake away!" cried Doyle, sitting astride of a lower branch, with his back against the trunk. "But you won't git nothin', old feller. This fruit ain't rip-."

"They show no signs of going, Nick, and it's past noon," said Fred, looking at his watch.

"Fact. I wish they had an appointment somewhere that couldn't be put off."

"Isn't it best to throw the venison down now?"

"Reckon I would, Captain. Perhaps it will pacify 'em. But hold on a minute. You'd better cut off a few slices first. Possible you may want them before they quit us."

This was not encouraging, but Innis proceeded to do as suggested.

"Well--shall I let this slide *now*?"

"No, don't let it slide—but throw it as far from the tree as you can, off that way," and Nick pointed in a direction opposite to the oak against which their guns were leaning.

"Oh, yes—I see."

Innis took one of the quarters, and after swaying it

backward and forward at arms' length for some time, flung it several rods off, and the watchful bears pounced upon it almost as soon as it struck the ground, tearing it fiercely to pieces with tooth and nail.

"Suppose that had been one of us now," said Doyle.

"That isn't a pleasant thought," replied Fred, shuddering.

"Now throw the other, and then I'll go down after the guns."

Innis did not consider it right to let his companion take all the risk, and after throwing down the other quarter of venison, he again offered to undertake the dangerous enterprise.

"It's my turn now, Nick, and I'm nearer to the guns than you."

"Yes, and you're nearer to the bears, too. Besides, you couldn't git a gun for *me*, you know."

Nick was watching the bears as he spoke.

"There; now their heads are both turned away from us," he said, beginning to descend. "Silence now!"

In a moment he stood upon the ground—hesitating. The guns were full twenty yards distant, and the tree against which they leaned was not one to be climbed. But all this he knew before—it was for another cause that he wavered. The beasts had quarreled over their food, and at this moment the female, espying the quarter which had been thrown down last, suddenly snatched it up and ran back with it toward the place where the animals had made their first meal, nearly midway between the two refuge trees.

She did not stop until she had gained that spot, and before she had quite done so, Nick was sorrowfully enough re-ascending.

"It's no use," he said; "'twas a mistake throwing that last piece. They'd both had to stuck to one joint if it hadn't been for that."

"What's to be done now?"

"Nothing but to wait."

CHAPTER X.

Wait they did. The bears finished their meal, without entirely devouring the carcass, and as they were evidently gorged with food, the unfortunate men hoped they would go away.

But they manifested no such design. After looking up into the trees, and growling wildly at the prisoners, they began to play, gambolling like elephants, and tossing about such light things as came in their way.

One of them went up to the guns, and after smelling of them, took Fred's rifle in his mouth, and ran around with it, like a pig with a wisp of straw.

"Blamed if I don't think he is goin' to shoot us, Captain," said Nick.

Fred laughed, despite his forebodings, but his uneasiness momentarily deepened. The hours were rapidly passing, and there were no signs of relief. By and by, the bears lay down, apparently for a *siesta*, but they did not seem to sleep. They licked themselves and each other, and now and then looked up into the trees with a monitory growl.

They were much nearer to Innis than to Nick, and the gun which they had dropped now lay directly under the boughs of the tree in which Fred had taken refuge. If they slept, he felt that it would be incumbent upon him to go down and get that gun.

He shuddered at the thought—but he resolved to do it—and he appreciated Nick's forbearance in not having already proposed it.

Suddenly, however, a new idea struck him, and he took out his knife and began to cut the deer skin into strips.

"What are you at, Captain?" asked Doyle.

"I'm going to fish for the gun."

"Capital!" said Nick. "You ought to be a backwoodsman, and not a New Yorker. Your genius is comin' out strong."

Fred laughed. It was the work of a few minutes to

make his line, with a large noose in one end, and he was soon directly over the coveted weapon, lowering the snare from which so much was hoped. He tried to get it under the butt of the gun, which did not seem to lie close to the ground—but a hundred efforts failed.

He next tried the muzzle, with similar results. An hour passed in these endeavors. The perspiration rolled from his face, and fell to the ground, as he lay prone upon a limb, thus fruitlessly fishing.

Nick looked anxiously on, encouraging him to persevere. The bears watched him, too, from time to time, but seemed too lazy to rise, and one of them appeared to sleep.

But at last—at last—the noose caught! It slipped under the muzzle, and was easily pulled along to the stock, where it held, and in another minute the rifle was dangling in the air, and was drawn slowly into the tree.

Never in his life had Fred enjoyed a moment of such exquisite triumph. The conqueror of Waterloo could scarcely have been more jubilant, and Nick, who was almost equally excited, swung his hat, and led off in three vociferous cheers, in which, of course, “the captain” heartily joined.

The gun was already loaded, and Innis’ powder flask hung at his side, and his bullets were in his pocket, so that he was not at a loss for ammunition. He brushed off the dirt and leaves from the weapon and at once prepared to fire.

“Take the big one,” said Nick, eagerly. “He’s layin’ on his side. Plump him in the body, just back of the shoulder—rather low. Thunder! But I’d give fifty ounces for that shot!”

“Keep cool! I can hit a barn door, Nick.”

“Yes—but it’s the *keyhole* you want to hit now, and that’s the heart.”

Never was heart more fairly exposed—but Fred, who was an indifferent marksman at the best, was flurried now, and Bruin’s organ of life escaped untouched. The ball, however, entered the shoulder of the beast, who sprang up with a growl, and ran furiously toward Innis’s tree, seem-

ing to understand that he had inflicted the sting. After some futile demonstrations against the bark, he returned and lay down again beside his mate, rather contemptuously, Fred thought, and seeming to say, 'Pop away, my boy, if it amuses you.'

"He doesn't even limp," said Innis, re loading.

"No—but he's hit. I saw blood. You can drive 'em away, if you can't kill 'em, Captain. They won't stand much peppering like that. Keep cool—and take good aim. He lays about right now."

A second bullet entered the body of the beast, apparently but a few inches from the heart, and again brought him to his feet, raging.

"First *rate*, Captain!" shouted Nick, clapping his hands with glee. "He can't stand many such."

Innis hastily re-loaded, and was ready to fire while the beast was almost under him, bellowing, with upraised snout and with distended jaws.

"Try his eye now, Captain; you've got him so close to you. Try his eye! That'll let the ball right into the brain."

Fred did not. He fired, instead, into the open gulf before him, and with what seemed at first a fatal effect.

The animal dropped and rolled over, struggling, but rose again and flew at the tree.

"Bravo! Bravo! You nearly done it that time, Captain," shouted Nick. "Another ball will fetch him, I reckon, if he only don't run—which I'm afraid he will."

"I have given him a sore throat, I guess," replied Fred, terribly excited.

All this while the female bear, being gorged to repletion with food, and unprovoked by a wound, remained lying down—in a semi-comatose state, seeming to take little heed of what was going on. She would raise her head at the crack of the rifle, or at an unusual growl from her companion, and then would drop it again and seem to sleep.

The wounded animal stood his ground until he had received two more shots—the last of which entered the neck

and seemed to tap the jugular, so profuse was the flow of blood which followed.

Then he began a rapid but unsteady retreat, bellowing loudly, limping, staggering and traveling in nearly a half circle clear beyond Nick's tree—where he stood shaking a moment and then dropped.

"He's down! He's down! And bleeding like a stuck pig," shouted Nick, who could see him, though Fred could not. "Now for the other!"

But madame did not seem disposed to await many leaden compliments. Missing her mate, she rose and followed him, receiving only one ball, (in the haunch), which merely served to quicken her speed.

She found, and moaned a little while over her dying consort, and then retired, howling, into the wilderness, whence her voice came back faint and fainter, until the relieved hunters knew that it was safe to descend.

Devoutly thankful for escape from the impending danger, and proud of an exploit which was thenceforth to render him renowned, Innis lowered himself quickly to the ground, and exchanged hearty greetings with his liberated friend.

They hastened to the side of the fallen monster, which still lived, but could be safely approached and dispatched, and Doyle was about giving it the finishing stroke when he drew back and handed the knife to Fred.

"Do it yourself, Captain," he said. "You shall have the full honor of killing this bear. You've done it all so far."

Innis complied, not without some pity for his fallen foe—and said:

"I should like his skin for a trophy—but we can't stop for that."

"Take his scalp and ears, while I cut some steaks out of the critter to take home. And let's be goin'. We have made such a rumpus about here, I am afraid we shall start up somethin' worse than grizzlies. So I propose, if it suits you, Captain, that we take the shortest cut to the hill-side, and down the hill-side to the

Sound, and that we walk along in the edge of the water the rest of the way home. That may throw 'em off; though I have my misgivings even then."

"It's a good plan. We'll do it."

CHAPTER XI.

They were between two and three miles yet from camp, but they were only some sixty or eighty rods from the long and steep declivity which led down to the margin of the Bottomless Sound, as Mr. Wakely had named the body of water which might more properly have been termed a lake.

They had barely started in their changed direction when they were startled by a sharp, short cry, seemingly from a human voice, and Nick, with Indian-like instinct, dropped instantly to the ground, Fred, of course, following his example.

"It ain't an Indian," he said, cocking his gun, and looking around as he lay on his hands and knees. "Least-ways, he ain't after us or he'd keep still."

"It sounded like some one in pain."

"Yes; and it sounded far off—or rather as if it was down in a hollow."

"But it came from the north side."

"Yes—well, there may be a descent that way, too. I think this is only a kind of ridge we are on, and that we are a great deal nearer the north slope than the south. Tell you what!"

"What?"

"That may be a panther. Their cry is mighty like a human. I should dearly like to shoot a panther. May I go back a little way and see, Captain?"

Fred laughed, and told him to do as he chose.

"'Cause if there is any special danger, we ought to know what it is. I'll be careful, and will be back in a jiffy."

"I may as well go with you."

"Come on. We'd better keep together, of course."

They had not gone a dozen rods before Nick announced

that they were close to the slope, and they approached the edge of the declivity very cautiously.

Whatever they had expected to see, we will venture to say their anticipations were surprised by the reality. The long and steep hill-side was but thinly wooded, and presented but little obstruction to a view of the landscape beyond—a charming landscape, and destined, doubtless, hereafter to be dotted everywhere with the happy homes of civilization.

A beautiful little lake, varying from half a mile to a mile in width, almost washed the base of the hill, while its inlet descended from the west, a narrow but shining stream, gracefully sinuous, and forming a large, silvery “S” upon the prairie-like plain.

It was not these beauties of nature, however, which now arrested the gaze of the hunters, and held them spell-bound in their tracks, but something of more immediate and far deeper interest to them.

A fleet of five bark canoes lay moored at the water's edge, almost directly in front of them, and at the very mouth of the inlet. These boats seemed at first view to be all empty, but there was a single Indian on the shore, near one of them, who had probably been left as a guard, while his companions were off on the chase.

But the actions of this savage were very strange. He seemed to be dancing and gesticulating with rage. He picked up stones and dirt on the beach, and threw them at one of the canoes; he waded into the lake, and scooping up water with his hands, threw that into the boat, and, finally, rushing up to it, he seemed to deal a heavy blow at the same inanimate object of his wrath.

“He is a madman!” said Innis, but at that instant, and simultaneous with the blow, came up the same short, sharp cry, which had first arrested their attention.

“There's some one in the boat,” said Doyle, “on the bottom, probably. It must be a prisoner, and that red fiend is amusing himself torturin' on him—or takin' his revenge for bein' left on guard, while all the rest are enjoyin' the pleasures of the chase.”

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Fred. "Let's rescue him, Nick."

Innis's first impulse at the sight of the canoes, had been to fly—but he forgot his fears, in sympathy for the wretched object before him.

Nick had meanwhile begun to climb a tree, saying: "I want to see whether the captive is an Injin or a white man. Ef he's an Injin he ain't worth reskin' our lives for."

"Here—take this!" said Fred, in great excitement, and handing up a pocket spy-glass which he always carried.

The Tennessean ascended to a high bough—used the glass for an instant, and then descended quickly, and in silence.

"It's a *white* man! A young chap—face all bloody!" he said, wrathfully. "Now, what do you say?"

Fred's lips were tightly compressed for a moment—his eyes flashing—and then he spoke solemnly:

"We will *rescue* him! So help us, God!"

"*That's* the ring of the true metal! I knew it was in you! Come on! The first thing to be done is to put a bullet through the head of that savage."

"Of course."

"And I want to get a little nearer for that. Not but what I could do it well enough from here—but I want to do it so he can't screech, you see."

"Yes—certainly."

"Plump through the brain."

Nick looked as delighted at the job before him as he possibly could have been, gourmand as he was, if he had been about to sit down to a Thanksgiving dinner, and had the odor of the turkey and plum-pudding already in his nostrils.

They descended about half way down the hill, and while doing so, they heard the faint report of two guns in an easterly direction.

"They're far off," whispered Doyle, stopping to listen,

"and they seem to be down on the plain. That's the reason we haven't heard them before."

"Hunting buffaloes, perhaps."

"Perhaps."

"We are about right, now," said Nick, coolly. "Stand still a moment."

The Indian was sea'ed now on the bow of the boat, which was drawn up a little way on the shore. His rage seemed to be sated, or his strength exhausted. His back was toward the hunters, and his face toward the prisoner; and as Doyle raised his rifle, Innis stepped a little aside with his glass to get a view of the position.

"Stay!" he said. "The prisoner is almost exactly in range. Ain't you afraid——"

The report of the rifle was his answer, and the savage fell forward into the boat.

"You shouldn't speak to a feller at sich a time," said Nick, proceeding to re-load before quitting his tracks. "You came nigh spilin' the finest drawn sight I ever tuk in my life."

"But I was afraid —— He was leaning forward with his head so low, and you shooting down, you see."

"Bless you! I know'd where the t'other man was. The bullet didn't go within two inches of *him*, even if it passed clean through the Injin's head, which isn't probable. I could ha' shot a squirrel's nose off at that distance, without disfingerin' on him much, neither."

All this was rapidly and excitedly said, and then the two men ran down the hill-side as fast as they could go—for they knew that their own danger was now most imminent.

"What—do you—suppose—that monster was doing—when—you fired?" asked Fred, as they ran, the words being jolted out of him by his violent motion.

"Don't know—some deviltry."

"Yes—he was poking—the other one—with a long stick—in the face."

When they reached the canoe, a singular and affecting sight presented itself. The Indian had fallen over, quite

dead, upon the bound man, who, vainly striving to release himself from the hideous contact, and to catch sight of his hoped rescuers, had struggled partly up from his recumbent position, and was looking wildly around, with a face covered with blood and tears.

"Take courage, my friend!" said Fred, "we've come to free you."

"Thank God!" murmured the young man, feebly, and then fell back insensible.

He was quietly lifted out and laid on the beach—the thongs of hide which tightly bound his hands and feet were cut—some water was dashed in his face—and he revived.

"Water! water!" were his first words; and he tried to crawl to the cooling element, which, with a refinement of cruelty, had been denied to his raging and feverish thirst, even when gliding for many a mile over its mocking wave.

Fred sprang to the boats, and in one of them found a gourd cup, which he brought brimming to the sufferer, and allowed him sparingly to partake.

"Thank God, again, and you, dear friends, whoever you are," he said, indistinctly. "But we must not stay here another instant. There are twenty fierce warriors in this party, and some of them may be within sight of us now."

"Come on, then! We will help you up the hill," said Fred; "our camp is but a few miles distant, and you will gain strength as we proceed."

But it was impossible. Mr. Vibbard (such was the stranger's name) could not even stand. The ligature upon his limbs had been so tight that his feet and ankles were numb and swollen, and the attempt to support himself upon them gave him excessive pain.

He looked appealingly, yet hopelessly, at his rescuers when this alarming fact was ascertained.

"We'll put him back in one of the boats, and row up the inlet," said Innis. "Quick, Doyle, help—lift him in. Perhaps when the circulation is fully restored he can

walk; if not, we must find a hiding-place for the night."

"That's it, Captain. Come on!"

The young man looked his gratitude as they carried and deposited him quietly in one of the largest canoes, and he said in a feeble voice:

"If they come—you must run and save your own lives, and I shall be no worse off than I was before. You cannot fight against so many."

No time was wasted in talking, for all felt the necessity of haste. The sun was low in the west, and the hunters would soon return—even if not re-called by the sound of Nick's rifle. That, however, even if heard, it was hoped would not awaken any suspicion, as the slain Indian had had a gun, and might naturally be supposed to have fired at some passing game.

His gun, which was an old battered rifle, of little use, they took, of course, together with his knife and tomahawk, which might come into play; and as they were about hurriedly casting off, Nick said, jumping out:

"Hold on a minute, till I set him up."

He ran back to the slain man, and raised the body to a sitting position in the bow of the boat, propping up his drooping head by placing under his chin the very stick, sharp-pointed, with which he had been pricking his prisoner, when death so swiftly overtook him.

"Now, he looks quite natteral like," said Nick, jumping into the waiting boat, and taking the oars. "You see, they won't be so apt to hurry home if they see him sittin' there all night. And an Injen can see a great way."

"Very true; I only hope they won't see us," added Vibbard, faintly. "There will be no hope for me if they do—for they can run twice as fast as you can row, especially up that crooked inlet."

A distant whoop responded, as it were, to this remark, striking terror into the hearts of the fugitives, and Ianis, raising his spy-glass with a hand that slightly shook, said quickly:

"They are coming, sure enough, on the full run—the

whole band—and not more than a mile off. They have seen us, of course.”

“Run—run, then—and save yourselves!” exclaimed Vibbard. “Take to the woods! You can do nothing for me!”

Innis and Doyle looked for a moment into each other's eyes. Escape in their present mode was clearly impossible. But to leave a fellow-being in such a straits it was too horrible, doomed as he would be to the direst torture, in expiation of the Indian's death.

“Back to the shore!” said Fred. (They had barely left the beach, and it was but an instant's work to regain it.) “Perhaps he can walk now, and we can assist him till we can find some hiding place, or some defensible position.”

It was impossible. The hapless youth could not support himself on his feet, and to drag him up the steep hill, which it was difficult to climb unburdened, was clearly impossible. As to the plains, there was no refuge there.

“It's a terrible bad job, Captain. I reckon we'll have to leave him, after all,” said Doyle, “and no time to be lost neither.”

He looked anxiously eastward as he spoke, where the savage pack was now in full view, swiftly but silently advancing. The single whoop which had been heard had doubtless been a signal of alarm to the band, by the first discoverer of the strangers; but after that the profoundest silence had been maintained by the fleet-footed foe.

A look of anguish was on Fred's face—Vibbard was still urging them to fly before it was too late—and Nick, with foot and body advanced, stood ready for a leap up the hill.

“Go—go—my friends!” repeated Vibbard, “you can do nothing more for me—unless you will, in mercy, give me a bullet from your revolver. It will be but an instant's work, and surely not a crime in you or me.”

He spoke imploringly, and bent his head as if in hope of receiving the fearful boon he had begged.

“Impossible!” replied Fred, shuddering.

"The other one, then," said Vibbard, anxiously, "Look the other way, but an instant, my friend, while *he* does it. It will be the greatest act of mercy that you ever accorded to a miserable mortal."

"God of Heaven—no! Nick, there is a chance yet! A chance for us all! Why had we not thought of it before?"

The thought came like inspiration.

"Quick!" he continued; "lift him back into the boat. We will try to escape down the lake—drag all the canoes after us—and scuttle them, as soon as we got a good offing. Then they will have no means of pursuit."

"You're captain, and we'll try," replied Nick, as they lifted Vibbard back, "but *I* think it's too late. They'll begin to fire in a minute."

CHAPTER XII.

They did try. The corpse of the slain Indian was pitched like a log into the water—the four empty canoes were shoved off, and turned around, and their bows being brought close to the stern of the other boat, Innis grasped their short cables (made of twisted bark), and Doyle, springing to the oars, pulled vigorously outward, dragging the tiny fleet after them.

No sooner had the savages witnessed this bold exploit than they sent up a wild shout of rage, and although still nearly half a mile distant, two or three stopped running to fire at the boats; but their bullets went wide of the mark, skipping across the water many yards ahead of the fugitives.

"Can't Vibbard hold them ropes?" asked Nick, eagerly, when he saw this.

"Yes—yes—my right hand is strong and well as ever."

"Then, Captain, you take the oars a minute—and let me have a pop at 'em. This shootin' is a game that two can play at. We won't lose no time."

The disabled man crawled forward, and took the ropes.

Innis climbed over him to the oars, and Nick, between the two, raised his rifle.

"Stiddy, a minute," he said, dropping on his knees: "she topples a little—stiddy! Hold the oars out, and sit still! You, Vibbard, there, don't wriggle so!"

"All right."

"There she is—she's stiddy, now—don't move a finger. This shootin' out of a boat is ticklish business, and something like shootin' out of a balloon; but I've got him now!"

The report followed, and the foremost man of the band fell to the earth, pierced by the ball of Nick's unerring rifle.

A yell of rage followed from the foe—an involuntary shout of triumph from Fred—and Nick, proceeding to reload, said:

"Good for *some*thin', ain't I, Captain?"

"Good? Why, you're worth your weight in gold, Nick."

"No—I ain't. I ain't worth more than my weight in lead—and I wish I had it here now to run into bullets for them fellows—for I haven't got any too good a supply."

"Down! Down! They're goin' to fire!" said the watchful Vibbard, lowering his own head beneath the gunwale.

Fred, (who had resumed rowing), and Nick followed his example, and the volley went harmlessly by—a few of the balls striking the rear boats.

"That's comin' unpleasantly near," said Nick, who had reloaded. "Let's return the salute. I don't like to be out-done in politeness—I don't."

The canoe was again stopped and steadied—but when the vigilant and far seeing enemy discovered the fatal rifle again levelled, they dropped simultaneously to the ground, and not a few of them went rolling over and over, in order more effectually to elude the aim of the terrible Tennessean.

"'Tain't no use—that ain't," said Nick. "That foremost feller will roll right against my bullet. You see if he don't."

He did. He was the only one that did not rise and run to cover after Nick fired, and again a shout of glee went up from the boat, followed by a discordant yell from the shore.

But the Indians had run much faster than the boat had been propelled, and they had, of course, materially diminished the distance between themselves and the fugitives—though thus far only to their own cost. But having now reached the head of the lake, not far from the point where the canoes had been moored—they fired a few rounds from the shelter of some bushes, to the imminent danger of their adversaries.

The balls struck all around them—one passed through Doyle's hat—and they did not dare to show any portion of their bodies above the edge of the boat, lest it should become a target for the savages.

The design of the quick-witted foe seemed to be to keep them from using the oars, so that the boats would gradually drift shoreward—there being a light wind blowing up the lake, which must inevitably, though very slowly waft the boats back almost to the place whence they had started.

A consultation was held by the three men, crouching in the bottom of the canoe. The peril was pronounced great, and momentarily increasing. The oars must be put in motion at all hazards.

"Tell you what," said Nick; "the other canoes are too much of a drag upon us. We must abandon them."

"They'll swim out and get them."

"I know it. It can't be helped. No body can go into them to scuttle 'em in this storm of bullets, and we must shake 'em off."

"Then what?"

"Then I'll take the oars and row for dear life. If I ain't hit—every minute will make us more safe, and six minutes will place us out of their reach. Night isn't far off, and that will favor us."

"You are right, Nick—in all but one thing," replied Innis, resolutely. "The duty is as much mine as yours. I will draw lots with you as to who shall take first innings at the oars for fifty strokes—after which we'll take turns. Your life is as dear to you as mine to me."

"No, Captain. I'm a better rower than you—and I've

faced more bullets. Besides, I can almost lay down and row, which you can't."

"The post of danger for which you contend ought to be mine," said Vibbard, mournfully. "and most gladly would I take it, if it were possible. You have placed yourselves in this dreadful jeopardy for me, and I can do nothing to assist you."

"Never mind," replied Nick. "There's no time for words now. What do you say, Captain? Shall he let go?"

"Yes."

"Cast off, then," said Doyle.

"Not yet," replied Vibbard. "We must at least take the oars out, and *I* can do that."

He drew the vessels up one by one, alongside of the leading canoe, seized the oars and pulled them in, and then cast off the boat. His appearance in a sitting posture was the signal for a fire "all along the line," but he persevered, unflinching, until his self-imposed task was done, and then dropped heavily back to the bottom of the canoe.

"He's drawn their fire now," said Nick, seizing the oars; "we won't argufy about the first innings, but I'll take 'em, and ef they're goin' to hit me, they must be pretty quick about it."

The little boat now leaped and danced across the water, impelled by the Tennessean's vigorous strokes—and it was a full minute before a gun was fired from the shore.

Then came a volley, and in the midst of it the oarsman tumbled over backward, to the great consternation of his friends, who at that terrible moment gave up all for lost.

"All right!" he exclaimed, quickly regaining his position. "I only dodged at the first flash, but I didn't mean to go clear over. All right!"

The boat was struck in several places, but no one was harmed. Again he leant to the oars, and with rapid and powerful sweeps, he added nearly a furlong to their distance from the foe before another discharge ensued, which, like the first, proved innocuous.

"I reckon we're nearly safe now," he said. "I don't

believe a ball would go through into the vitals if it should hit a feller here."

But it was several minutes yet before Nick relaxed his efforts, and lay upon his oars with a sense of security.

"We're safe *for the pres'n'*," he said, emphasizing the words; "but jes' look back there. They're dividin' in o two parties to follow us—one on each side of the lake—and when they catch up with us on shore, they won't be more'n a quarter of a mile off on either side, even if we keep quite in the middle."

He resumed rowing as he spoke.

"But we have a good start," replied Innis.

Nick shook his head.

"I don't want to croak," he added. "But we may as well look things in the face. An Injin can run a mile in seven minutes. That's nearly twice as fast as it's possible to row a canoe. There's lots of shelter for 'em in them scattered trees and bushes, and when they've once overtuk us, they can run along parallel to the boat, dodgin' behind trees, and pick us off at their leisure without exposin' themselves."

"But the night——"

"It will be clear and moonlight, Captain. 'Sides that, they'll overtake us long before dark. See how the imps run."

"It looks bad, certainly. But we must trust in that kind Providence which has thus far protected us. Let me now take your place for awhile."

As they changed places, a groan from young Vibbard attracted attention, and on turning to him, they found him trying to staunch the blood flowing from a severe wound in the shoulder. He had been hit while securing the oars of the cast-off canoes, and had tried to keep it secret, lest he should add to the alarm and trouble of his friends, whose energies were already so fully tasked.

Nick bound up the wound with some skill, and pronounced it to be not a dangerous one, but said the ball ought to be extracted, and that he would undertake to do it, as soon as the present emergency had passed, if it ever did pass.

"As things stand," he said, bluntly, "it's hardly worth while to put you to the pain, since we may all be riddled with bullets before an hour is over."

"You ought not to talk like that, Nick," said Innis.

"It's best to look things in the face, Captain," replied Doyle. "I got pretty well used to that when I was a soldier—though I must say I never was in quite as bad a box as this."

"There's an island," whispered Vibbard, "just beyond that headland—and not more than a mile and a half from here, I should think—perhaps not that."

"An island! Pull, then, Captain, with a will. All depends on our gittin' there afore they git abreast of us. Pull with a will! I'll take the oars again myself in about two minutes."

There was a bend in the lake, around a sort of promontory, which concealed their anticipated place of refuge from view—but Vibbard, who had come up the lake with his captors on the preceding day, had noticed and remembered the locality.

In answer to Nick's eager inquiries, he said there were trees and bushes upon it, but that it was very small, not being more than fifty or sixty rods long.

"The smaller the better," said Doyle, "so we can get foothold on it and find shelter. It will be the more easily defended."

The prospect was a dismal one at the best, for it was evident that so small a territory, lying so near the mainland on either side, could be commanded at all points by the guns of the enemy, and that only constant and close concealment could give even temporary safety. A siege would soon starve them out—and all knew the untiring vigilance of an Indian foe, when stimulated by hoped revenge for a slain brother.

Still, temporary safety was something, and every effort was made to gain the wished asylum with speed and without further damage. The race was exciting and doubtful. The enemy, no longer attempting concealment, rushed

along the shore with shouts and yells, which evinced their confidence of a speedy triumph.

When the island came in sight, they were not eighty rods behind the fugitives, and were rapidly gaining. They did not stop to fire, nor did Nick, who now had the oars, and was bending like a Hercules to his task, dare for a moment to intermit his labors.

Innis and Vibbard looked on in amazement. The light canoe seemed to leap over the water which foamed under her prow, and hissed and boiled in her wake.

That such violent exertions could not long continue was evident, but in reply to a hint to spare himself a little, Nick replied, panting:

"No; it's neck or nothing now. If they get abreast of us, there'll be no more rowing—and we'll never set foot on the island. Twenty guns can't all miss us, at such a range."

Innis was meanwhile surveying the foe with his glass, first on one shore and then on the other, and he could compare them to nothing but a pack of yelping wolves as they rushed forward, gliding in and out among the trees and bushes which lined the shore at intervals.

"Give them a shot—on each side," said Doyle; "it may hold them in check a little."

Fred took his rifle.

"I shan't hit them," he said.

"No telling. A bullet is sometimes guided, I think. Fire away."

Innis did so, without visible effect, other than a momentary pause of the pursuers.

"Try the other side now, with my rifle. It carries further. Aim at the middle of the gang."

Vibbard seized the glass and watched the result.

A savage tumbled headlong, and the whole pack stopped and gathered around him.

"That's the talk, Captain!" shouted Nick, pausing a moment on his oars. "Aim the other side now with your empty gun. They've seen it!"

Fred did so, and the watchful savages, warned by the

fate of their comrade on the opposite shore, dropped like logs upon the ground.

"So—so ; we can rest a little now," exclaimed Doyle, laughing. "Let them lay there, if they will."

They did not, of course, lie long, but crawling, snake-like, to shelter, they rose and resumed their race, a little further from shore, dodging behind the trees and stooping beside the low bushes which lay between them and the water.

The other party, being also again in motion, Nick, much rested, resumed the oars, but no longer with any fears about reaching the island, which now seemed to be fairly floating toward the fugitives, so rapidly was its distance lessened.

The savages seemed also to yield the point, as far as the race was concerned, for they slackened their speed, and slunk away from the shore, knowing full well that the asylum which the white men were compelled to accept was a trap more easily entered than escaped from.

CHAPTER XIII.

The refuge was quickly gained, and whatever their destined doom, it was a wonderful relief to tread the solid earth, and to rest, panting, upon its velvet breast, beneath the shade of sheltering shrubbery, which concealed them from distant view.

Here Vibbard, who had been tenderly lifted out, and laid upon the green sward by his companions, told them for the first time the story of his capture.

He had belonged to a party of miners, who were located about a dozen miles further north, on a mountain gully which ran into the outlet of this very lake. This stream, which was of considerable width, was their frequent resort, both for bathing and fishing, and three of their party had been surprised, while engaged in the latter amusement, by this band of savages, who were bound on a hunting expedition up the lake

Two of their number had been shot dead, and himself slightly wounded and captured, and that he had been reserved for torture he judged from various indications. In fact, he said, the unprovoked aggressions of the miners upon small bands of roving savages had been so frequent, that they had become greatly exasperated, and no mercy was to be hoped for at their hands.

"When will men learn the law of human kindness, to which all hearts, even the most untutored are open?" asked Innis.

"I don't know about that," replied Nick, morosely, "An Injin is an Injin, and he's naterally cruel; and I'd shoot 'em wherever I could find 'em."

"It is this estimate of them, and this treatment of them, that makes them what they are—at least, in a great degree. They are human beings, and you may be assured that they have kindly and generous sympathies like other men."

But there was little time to moralize. Hunger began to press, and fortunately there was a good meal for all in the bear steaks which Innis carried in his coat pocket. A fire was built in a hollow, and supper was speedily prepared, and eaten with great gusto, and there was something even reserved for the morrow.

What the enemy's designs were it was difficult to guess. They kept out of sight, and with the exception of an occasional bullet, sent at random to the island, they remained quiet. It was a moonlight night, and flight was evidently impracticable, and a couch of bushes, bush-covered, was fitted up for Innis and Vibbard.

"You shall sleep quietly to-night, and I'll watch," Nick said. "The redskins may have got hold of some of their boats by this time, and they might make us a visit before morning. They're very polite people, and very attentive to strangers. Always call on 'em when they move into their neighborhood."

The good-natured fellow would hear of no other arrangements; he dressed Vibbard's wounds, and when

both the young men were bestowed on their leafy couch, he covered them with bushes.

"You'll call us if it clouds up enough for flight," said Fred.

"Oh, yes; I'll see that you wake if there is need. Sleep as sound as you choose. I shall walk across the island once in fifteen minutes, all night long, and keep watch of both shores. So never fear a surprise. If anything shakes you in the night, it ain't an Injin—it's me."

"All right. Good night."

CHAPTER XIV.

Nick Doyle was reasonably vigilant. He patrolled the island nearly all night, occasionally visiting the sleepers and the boat. But Nick's apprehensions were, unfortunately, confined to one view of danger, *i. e.*, an invasion by means of the recovered boats. Notwithstanding his boasting, he was not quite prepared for all the daring and subtlety of an Indian Brave.

Had he used Innis's glass, which he held in contempt, insisting that he could see better without than with it, he might possibly have discovered, about two o'clock in the morning, a small, black object in the water, a third of the way out from the eastern shore, and slowly approaching the island. The moon was nearly full, and the surface of the lake, rippled only in spots by the slight breeze, was everywhere aglow with its mild light; but the object alluded to was scarcely one to excite suspicion, even if seen.

It disappeared from time to time, like a diving duck or loon, but always returned to the surface nearer than it went down to the island, although not in a direct line from the point of departure to any part of the little coast. It seemed rather to be drifting down the lake, though gradually approaching the northern extremity of the isle—the opposite end to that where the fugitives had landed and had *bivouacked*.

The swimmer, for such it was, made his last dive about a dozen rods from the shore, and came up under the

shadows of the coast, where he waded to land, and having rubbed his chilled limbs awhile, he lay down to rest; for his exertions had been enough to fatigue the hardiest frame.

He was naked, with the exception of a belt, in which were a knife and a tomahawk, the latter of which he took from his belt, and held in his hand during his brief repose. Very brief it was—no longer than was needed to recover his natural breathing—and then, after a short period of intent listening, he proceeded slowly, and in a stooping posture, along the western shore.

When he had thus traversed nearly half the length of the little island, skulking in the shallows, creeping at times past some little patch of moonlight, and ready, like the beaver, to plunge into and under the water, if serious danger threatened, he stopped suddenly, threw himself upon the ground, and lay there for some minutes quite motionless.

A crackling among the bushes had announced the approach of sentinel Nick, who was marching to the eastern terminus of his beat, without suspicion of danger, and who passed within a few yards of the prostrate Indian, and stopped on the shore, gazing outward. Nick was not an inviting object of attack to the nearly unarmed savage, for he carried a rifle and revolver, and the hatchet and knife of the Indian who had been slain at the head of the lake were in his belt; and the red scout did not emerge from his hiding-place until the sentinel had resumed his march to the opposite side of the island.

The savage did not follow, but when the way was clear, he again proceeded northward along the shore, on the route which he had been pursuing before his course was interrupted.

What was his design? Had he conjectured that since one played the sentinel so vigilantly the others might be securely sleeping, and might prove his unresisting victims?

Within five minutes he was at the head of the little island, and not twenty yards from the forest couch for which

he seemed to be looking. Certainly he was looking for something, as, with slow and cat-like tread, he stepped over bush and briar, bending low now and then, and carefully putting aside the boughs which impeded his way. The shadows lay thick around the sleepers, and now, when he stands within a dozen paces of their hiding-place, he sees them not. The noise of the breeze that murmurs through the tree-tops alone prevents him from hearing their loud breathing—for they sleep securely and dream of home.

His course was still onward, slowly onward, towards the couch of bushes, which lay directly in his path; but now it deviates to the left, and his eye is on the shore, which he has never quitted far. Suddenly he starts, and steps quicker, for he catches sight of the canoe, which, it soon became evident, was the principal object of his expedition to obtain. He stands at its side—he pushes it off the beach, and lingers a moment, as if in doubt whether to make off with his great prize, or to return and add to his now ensured laurels the always coveted trophies of an Indian brave, the scalps of his foes.

Discretion prevails—he steps into the boat, and using a single oar as a scull, he propels it silently and rapidly from the shore, exulting in the thought that he has thus deprived the besieged men of all chance of escape, while he has, at the same time, secured to his own people the means of attack. An attack, too, at a time of their own choosing, in the darkness of some clouded night, amidst the howlings of some furious storm, when they might land a boat-load of warriors to accomplish their fell purpose in safety.

But that start, and quicker step of the savage, when he first discovered the canoe, had broken some crackling bushes near the head of the sleepers, and Vibbard (who slumbered lightly, and woke often, in consequence of his wounds), was roused. He looked around, expecting to see Nick, who had several times visited them during the night, and not finding him, he carefully awakened Innis, but whispered to him to be silent.

"There is somebody near us," he said, "or some animal. Listen."

Hearing nothing further, Fred rose silently, after a few seconds, and looked about him, and he was about to return to bed, when something like a faint splash reached his ears.

"There is something wrong," he said; "maybe an attack. I will give the signal for Nick."

So saying, he fired one chamber of his revolver, and, with presented weapon, awaited the result; not without fear that the foe would be upon him before his ally could arrive. But Nick had not far to come, and he came bounding like the panther, and was very soon at Innis's side, fierce for the struggle, which he believed to be at hand.

"What is it?" he asked quickly. "An attack?"

Fred told him what they had heard, and they proceeded quickly to the water's edge, while Vibbard, who found that he could once more stand, followed them with slow and limping step.

Their loss was at once discovered, and the departing boat was seen, not thirty rods from shore, slowly moving outward, but without an occupant, for the Indian had, doubtless, leaped out at the sound of Fred's revolver. But it was evident he was in front of the canoe, swimming and towing it along by its little cable, for there was nothing in wind or current to account for its outward progress. He could not be seen or hurt, and he seemed to know it, for several random shots not only failed to scare him from his purpose, but brought back a faint shout of defiance from the water.

The magnitude of the loss impressed all hearts, and something like despair was visible in the faces of the younger men.

But Nick Doyle rose to the occasion.

"There is only one thing to be done, and only one man to do it," he said, throwing off coat and boots. "I ought to be able to swim faster without a boat than a redskin with one. Good bye, boys, if I don't come back,

but I feel as if I had the strength of twenty giants in me now."

Remonstrance was unheeded, perhaps unheard, for Nick was in a furor of excitement, caused partly, no doubt, by the fact that he had been outwitted by the savage, and that the threatened calamity was due to his remissness as a sentinel.

Tightening the belt which held his hatchet and knife, (of course his rifle and revolver were discarded,) he took a running leap into the lake, and then struck boldly out with a strong, equable motion, and at a rate of progress which gave some promise of success, yet failed to inspire Innis and Vibbard with anything like hope.

"It's terrible," said the former; "even if he overtakes the boat, this duel in the water can scarcely fail to be fatal to both. What do you think? Is he lost?"

"I fear so; but I think he will turn back. It is hard swimming, half-clothed, like that."

"He is very strong."

"He need be—if he follows far."

They watched him breathlessly; he gained rapidly, but he was far from shore, and the chase was very much farther. When about midway between the boat and the beach, he rose partly out of the water, and sent forth a succession of terrific shouts, such as he had sometimes joined in, during a charge on the field of battle. They were designed to notify the Indian of pursuit, and to drive him from his prize; and there is little doubt that they astonished, if they did not frighten the savage, for he sent back no response, unless it was lost in the prolonged war-cry which presently arose from the eastern shore.

The puzzled warriors on the main land did not fire—for they did not understand the position of affairs, but they continued for many minutes to "make night hideous" with their discordant yells.

Nick, in the meantime, increased his efforts and his speed. It seemed as if he had had a fund of reserved power, which he was just bringing into play. He was soon within a dozen rods of the boat, and his renewed

shouts, doubtless, caused him to seem much nearer to the red man, for the motion of the little vessel immediately slackened, and then they ceased altogether. It was evident that she was abandoned, and that the half-exhausted Indian had no mind to try the prowess of his foe in the water. The memory of the sturdy sentinel, as he had seen him on the shore, probably did not present an inviting object of attack.

At all events, he fled ingloriously, and the triumphant Nick soon climbed, dripping, into the deserted boat, which, (after some short, but earnest ejaculations of thanks to Heaven for his preserved life,) he put in rapid motion for the island.

How breathlessly his friends on shore had watched all this—how their prayers went up for his safety—how their gratitude now gushed forth—how they swung their hats and hurrahed—and how they hugged their heroic friend, in their transports, as he leaped ashore—all this need scarcely be told.

"Nonsense," said Nick, in reply to those attentions, "'twarn't much. But if he'd had the pluck to stop and fight, it would have been somethin' of a tussle, I dessay."

The threatened loss had been so great, the danger in all respects had been so imminent, that the besieged men began to look upon their present condition as one of comparative safety. They had a boat—they had a little food, and might, perhaps, procure more. Vibbard was recovering the use of his limbs, and they had only to be vigilant in guarding their little territory, not easily assailable, and to await the first dark night to effect their escape.

These calculations, in fact, proved correct. The afternoon of that very day, which was now near its dawn, gave warning, or rather gave promise of a storm. Heavy clouds skirted the west at sundown, and ere midnight, spread to the zenith, and overhung the whole sky like a pall. Nothing could have been more favorable for flight—for, although the wind was high, and the waves were rough, they had little fear that their dancing canoe would not ride the billows in safety.

"If she capsizes, all we've got to do is to swim round and right her agin, as the Injins do," said the exultant Nick.

About twelve o'clock they embarked, steering directly up the lake, and preserving perfect silence, except when the ex-soldier now and then gave way to an involuntary chuckle.

"Tell you what," he said, in a whisper, as he rested a minute from the labor of the oars, "it's my private opinion that they'll guess this out, and that some of 'em will be up around the head of the lake, and especially about the Inlet."

"I've thought of that," replied Vibbard.

"So we won't go there; we'll stop half a mile this side, on the east shore, and cut across the plains for the hills and the woods."

"I'm afraid Vibbard can't 'cut' much," replied Fred.

"Well, there'll be no great hurry, probably. He can walk slowly."

"I can run, I think," said the young man, "though with some pain. The swelling is subsiding, and the circulation seems to be restored."

Nick's plan was followed, and with perfect success. No one appeared to dispute their passage to the hills, which were gained in safety, and although their progress was slow up the steep ascent, and through the woods (which were utterly dark, and were resonant with the cry of panthers and wolves), they reached the camp long before day.

Wakely and Terence were already up, and received them with inexpressible delight. They had been out all the preceding day, searching for their missing friends, and their anxiety and alarm had become extreme.

This, of course, terminated the mining campaign of our heroes. They could not remain longer in their present quarters in safety, nor had they any desire to do so. The season was far advanced—their gains had been very large, and they proceeded at once to break up their encampment, and prepare for departure, little dreaming that the month

which had been pouring such a golden harvest into their laps were working even greater miracles for them in another quarter. The rapidity with which San Francisco became a large and wealthy city, and her soil more valuable than that of the time-worn metropolises of the old world, is yet the standing marvel of the age, and when Innis and Jotham returned to the capital, more richly freighted than before, it was to find themselves, by the unexampled rise of their real estate, among the very heaviest capitalists of the city. They at once devoted themselves to the business of improving and selling their estate, an employment which occupied them fully for a considerable portion of another year. Leaving them thus engaged, let us return to take a view of some events which were in the mean time occurring in New York.

CHAPTER XV.

Thirteen months had rolled by since the departure of Innis from New York, without bringing a word of tidings from him to his friends at home, when at length rumors began to arrive that he was rapidly amassing a fortune in El Dorado. Still there were no letters. But one morning, as Seth Whitman was sitting in rather a dull mood in his office, (he now had an office of his own,) drumming the same old dismal tattoo, and mentally debating whether he could afford to take his sweetheart to the opera, to hear a new singer, an express agent came in, and deposited a dirty-looking package on the table, remarking only that the charges were paid. As the messenger hurried out, Seth glanced lazily at the parcel, without rising from his seat.

"Winter stockings from home, I guess," he said, poking at it with his cane. But it felt like something heavier.

"Chestnuts," said Seth, giving it another poke. But it did not feel like chestnuts.

He rose, yawning—took out his knife to cut the strings, and lifted up the parcel.

"Pluto! how heavy," he said: "Joe has been playing

off one of his pranks here; I shouldn't wonder now if this was a flat-iron."

He cut string after string, and tore off wrapper after wrapper, until his patience was well-nigh exhausted, and there lay glittering before his expanding eyes a large lump of solid and burnished gold.

"It's from Fred Innis!" said Seth, "and it's for me!" and he danced around the room, gold in hand, for a few minutes, like a madman. Next, he caught up his hat, and ran to the assayer's to learn the weight and value of his prize. It was not a native specimen, but had been run into its present shape for convenience of transportation, and its value proved to be over two thousand dollars.

"I guess I can afford to go to the opera," said Seth to himself, as he went gaily homeward.

Rumors began to increase of Innis's great prosperity in California; it was said that, after remarkable success at the mines, he had returned to San Francisco, became a land speculator, and realized a princely fortune. The story of the lump of gold which he had sent to Whitman became current, and hundreds flocked to Seth to know if it was really true; to see it, handle it, and inquire what tidings came with it of the fortunate adventurer. It was astonishing to see how many people became suddenly interested in Mr. Innis's welfare. Even old Twiggs, half of whose fortune had been swamped by a speculation in connection with a scoundrel, who had given him the "very best security," and the other half of which was in imminent jeopardy from the same cause—even old Twiggs became greatly solicitous "for poor Fred's" welfare.

"His father was my best friend, as I have often told you," he said to his daughter, "and it is my duty to be his. If Frederick Innis wants any assistance, I am ready to help him personally, and our bank will afford him all business facilities that he may require. I shall write to him at once."

"Oh, papa, I would not," said Kitty: she was about to add that he would make himself appear very ridiculous, but she dared not.

"Why not? it is best to be on good terms with him. He may be serviceable."

"But you know ——"

"Know what?"

"You did not help him, nor his father," stammered Kitty, desperately.

"N-no—it was not quite convenient, then: but I am going to offer *now*, ain't I? How ridiculously you talk! What more would you have?"

"Yes, now, when he does not want help."

"Besides that, young Whitman said that Frederick did not know anything about his having applied to me in his behalf, and never would know it. Then I always *meant* to help him as soon as it was convenient. *I shall write to him.* The truth is, Kitty, Fred is a first-rate, clever fellow—as his father was before him—and I always thought he would get along."

Twiggs wrote.

Time passed on, and the next arrival from California brought a letter from Innis to Whitman, more than confirming all the reports of his extraordinary success, and inclosing a draft to his young friend for five thousand dollars.

"Do not hesitate, dear Seth," he wrote, "to accept this as freely as it is gladly given, and be assured it is only an earnest of what I intend to do for you. I call myself, to-day, a millionaire, and am about closing up my affairs here, and returning home. Leave no effort untried to ascertain who was my generous helper in the hour of need, for my happiness will be incomplete until I am able to requite that noble act."

Seth now went nearly crazy. He hardly knew whether he rejoiced most for himself or for Innis, for the sum he had received seemed like an immense fortune to him, and he immediately employed himself in procuring and sending considerable presents to his brothers and sisters in the country. After this, he set earnestly about the task assigned him by his friend, of learning the name of his benefactor; but all his efforts proving futile, and not feeling at

liberty to take any steps which would make the affair public, he resolved to postpone further inquiries until the return of Innis.

This event was not long postponed. Frederick returned, and took quarters at a fashionable hotel, where his self-styled friends soon flocked around him, together with a few like Whitman, whose friendship was genuine, and who heartily rejoiced in his successes for his own sake.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. TWIGGS preserved his consistency of character. He called upon Innis—white cravat, gold-headed cane and all—not without a deal of pomposity, which was partly the result of habit, and partly assumed to prop up his falling dignity.

He repeated the offer of services which he had made by letter, (the letter had never been received), and said he should be always happy to oblige the son of an old friend. Innis refrained, with an effort, from a bitter reply, and bowed his visitor out.

But this semblance of respect proved far worse for Twiggs than more open coldness; for being obtuse to all the signs of Frederick's disgust, he went away fully persuaded that he stood high in the young man's esteem, and resolved to make the most of his influence. He soon talked himself into the belief that Innis was his protege, and led many to believe that the young man was under great obligations to him.

"We must make a party for him at once," he said to Kitty. "there is no telling what may be the result. You and he, I believe, used to be pretty good friends; you were always taking his part."

Kitty blushed crimson, but protested against the party, urging its absurdity, on the ground that Mr. Innis had never been intimate in their family, and had not even called there since his return from California.

"Never mind that; we must not be too particular," said Twiggs; "besides, we do not say that the party is made especially for him. We will certainly do it at once, and all that

you will have to do, my dear, will be to make sure and appear to the best possible advantage."

The banker's anticipations began to run exceedingly high. Let but his daughter marry the millionaire, he thought, and his own former pecuniary standing, which had indeed become greatly impaired, might yet be entirely recovered. He by no means partook of his daughter's delicacy of feeling on the subject of paying such open court to Innis, and he spoke often and freely, while the party was in prospect, of its being given "for his young friend, Frederick."

This remark, singularly enough, reached the ears of Seth Whitman, who, red with wrath, flew to Innis, and told him what he had meant never to tell, all the particulars of his application to Twiggs, and his cold, heartless, taunting rejection.

"Don't go to the hypocritical old toady's," he said—"don't go near him, the selfish, narrow-minded, cold-blooded, close-fisted, scheming, plotting—"

How long Seth's string of vituperative adjectives would have become is uncertain, but Frederick interrupted him.

"You may spare your anathemas when I tell you that I know him, fully—completely. I did not, of course, know the fact of which you have informed me, but it is in keeping with his character, and I am not at all surprised at it."

"But you will not go?"

"I certainly shall not, and I have already written my regret."

"Good—capital, glorious!"

Unspeakable was Twiggs' mortification on receiving Innis' note. He had talked so much, and so patronizingly, and to so many people about Frederick, and had promised to so many the pleasure of meeting him at his house, that he felt quite overwhelmed with the prospective ridicule which he foresaw in store for him. He knew not what to say, and was really abashed even in the presence of his own daughter, while poor Kitty, on her part, without being at all to blame, had an equal share of shame and grief to undergo. He could not have shown his indifference for her in a more marked manner. Kitty was very sad, but uncomplaining.

The party was now something to be endured, and to be got through with in the best way possible. She departed herself

irreproachably well, showing no discomposure of any kind, and completely neutralizing, by her gentle and lady-like deportment, every laugh and sneer that was leveled against her. Not so Twiggs, who made his mortification apparent by a thousand awkward explanations which proved nothing, excepting his own sense of his ridiculous situation.

About this time, Mr. Chink, who had never been able to free himself from the fascinations of Kitty, ventured to repeat his proposals to her father, hoping that time might have wrought some change in her feelings, and willing, as he said, to take her hand, and trust to the future to obtain her heart.

Twiggs gladly accepted the offer in her behalf, never doubting that now, in their season of adversity, his daughter would readily comply, and being fully resolved that she should do so; for he was accustomed to the most implicit obedience from his children, and like all out-of-door sycophants, he played the tyrant in his own family.

But Kitty refused, and was resolute and fixed in her refusal, and a domestic scene raged for a week in the house of Twiggs, growing each day more violent, until it resulted in an entire rupture of all social ties. Kitty was taunted, was ridiculed, was denounced in the bitterest terms known to ungovernable rage, and was finally threatened with an apprenticeship to a trade, if she still continued uncomplying.

"That, at least, is beyond your power," she replied mildly. "I am of age, and the law gives you no right to control me."

"Nor does it compel me to support you. I thank you for reminding me of it. This day, if you continue obstinate, you shall quit my house."

"This hour," said Kitty, flushed with wrath; "this hour I will quit a house where I have heard language which no lady should ever hear, even from a stranger."

Kitty left the house within one hour, and unopposed.

Her mother had virtually sided with her father in his coercive measures, and neither believed, even after she had gone, that she would continue unyielding. They flattered themselves that the violent crisis which had now arrived would result favorably, and they looked hourly for her return, penitent and complying.

But Kitty did not return. She sought shelter in the house

of a maternal aunt, who fully justified her conduct, and gave her a hearty welcome. Her father, after in vain waiting a few days for her return, sought out her retreat, with a view of renewing his persuasions, but when she learned his errand she utterly refused to see him. She did more—she wrote a letter to Mr. Chink, so entirely definite and decisive in its refusal, so dignified and noble in its appeal to him to cease addresses which had become a persecution, that that gentleman at once took her part against himself, and utterly refused to negotiate further with Twiggs, whom he accused of having entirely deceived him in regard to the state of his daughter's feelings.

About a week after she had taken up her abode with her aunt's family, Kitty, oppressed with many powerful thoughts, went out one bright morning, designing to call upon a friend, who lived about a mile distant. Nothing was further from her thoughts than the expectation of meeting Innis, yet, strangely enough, while crossing a park, his carriage rolled by and stopped in front of the gate which she was approaching.

Kitty would have fled if she could, but being unable to do so, she walked slowly and looked steadily the other way, hoping that Innis would not perceive her.

But she was mistaken. He was at her side in a trice, and his dismissed carriage was rattling down the avenue.

It was an embarrassing interview at first to both parties, but it soon grew less so, until restraint became ease, and ease, confidence and cordiality. They walked slowly and a long way, for Frederick had a great deal to say, and it seemed that he never would have done talking. Before Kitty knew where she was, they were half a mile beyond her friend's house, and afterward, when they had turned to retrace their steps, they again passed it, and were half a mile on the other side before the error was noticed, and all that long way, although walking slowly, Fred was talking earnestly and sometimes rapidly, but always in a low voice. Kitty had almost nothing to say, but she seemed to have a great deal to look at on the pavement, from which she scarcely raised her eyes.

"It was my blunder," said Fred. "I should have looked for the number. Let us go back again."

"It is not material—some other day will answer for the

call. "I think I would prefer to go home now," and Fred escorted Kitty back to her aunt's residence, succeeding by great vigilance, in getting to the right house without further blunders.

CHAPTER XVII.

NICK possessed but little vanity or love of ostentation, but he now had reasons for making a display and seeking the eclat of the fashionable world. He purchased one of the modern palaces of the metropolis, and furnished it in a style of gorgeousness quite unsurpassed in the city. His table, his plate, his servants, and his horses and carriages, were all in a style of magnificence which excited comment and envy among those who were accustomed to rank first in all those expensive luxuries. It was with a kind of magical celerity, too, that he had called all these things around him, as if unwilling to lose a day in seizing upon the many pleasures of life from which he had been so long debarred.

He did not occupy his great house alone. His only relations, a widowed aunt, a lady of much elegance of mind and manners, and her two young daughters, had been sought out by him, in the indigent state to which they had been reduced, and had been sharers of his home and fortunes. He had not long been a householder, before it was announced that preparations were on foot for a magnificent party under his own roof.

He had attended a round of these entertainments at the houses of his friends, and there was a propriety in returning their civilities, now that he had every facility for doing so. The cards of Mrs. Harvey were soon in circulation for this purpose, and happy were all on whom these coveted favors fell.

Kitty was not "left out." Both she and her aunt were invited, to the great surprise of the latter, and Mr. Twiggs, to his equally great surprise, was not. The time came, and the people. A brilliant throng they were, as far as externals went, and brilliantly were they received and entertained. Never had Upper-Tendom seen any thing superior in costliness and elegance to the *fete* of the young millionaire, whose ex-

quisite taste had directed every thing more for its own gratification than for the applause of the multitude.

When the expected time for dancing came, there was a great delay in beginning that diversion, which no one seemed to comprehend. The musicians were all at their posts, giving many a note of warning and preparation, and every one was in momentary expectation of hearing the order to choose partners during a long half-hour, but still no order came. Innis sauntered about the rooms, seemingly unconscious that any thing was amiss, chatting easily with a dozen different belles, and carrying with him an atmosphere of hope to every fluttering heart which he approached. When the patience of many was well-nigh exhausted, a new arrival was announced, and the next moment Kitty Twiggs, radiant with exquisite beauty, was receiving the kind greetings of Frederick, who had hastened to meet her, and the polite attentions of his aunt.

All saw in a moment how matters stood. In five minutes the music sounded a peremptory note; there was a call to choose partners, and Innis led off his beautiful guest, for whom they had so long been kept waiting.

Three days after the fete everybody knew perfectly well that Frederick and Kitty were engaged to be married. Rumor brought the astonishing, but still most welcome tidings to Mr. Twiggs' ears, who, although a little humbled, again foresaw, as he thought, the certain restoration of his fortune, and the accomplishment of all his brilliant designs.

A few days later Frederick Innis and the beautiful Kitty were married, unostentatiously, in the presence of a few friends, at church, whence they went directly to the house of the bridegroom, a palace in all but the name, of which the discarded daughter was to be the future mistress.

The father was not present, and was left to learn the event from public rumor.

His delight was mingled with bitter mortification at the slight which he had received, but his self-conceit soon regained the ascendancy, and he concluded that if he had been intentionally omitted from both the party and the wedding, it resulted from a belief on the part of Innis that he was ap-

posed to the marriage. Whatever it was, however, he resolved to speedily set it right, and he never doubted that the least approach to conciliation on his part would be met by all the kind and cordial returns to which the most generous and affectionate father could have been entitled.

He called to see his daughter, and found her kind and gentle as usual, but there was some invisible barrier between them, which prevented a return to the familiarity of other days, and his words of congratulation, despite every effort to the contrary, sounded cold and formal to his own ears.

Innis received him with the same chilling politeness which had marked their former interview, or if there was any change, he was even more ceremonious to his guest than before. This was at first highly encouraging to Twiggs, but here again he found himself continually held back from any approach to familiarity.

He went home in doubt, and when a week had passed without any advances on the part of his children, his doubts grew stronger and darker. Humbled and desperate, he again called, to meet with a precisely similar reception, and another week was passed in futile hopes and surmises.

Then he wrote to his daughter, inclosing a letter to his son-in-law, in which he stated his embarrassments, and coolly requested the latter to take his property and assume his debts merely, until some unexplained contingencies should occur fully to relieve him. There would be, he said, but a trifle of twenty thousand dollars or so to be advanced, and every thing could slumber quietly till better times. It was a mere form, which scarcely required more than the scratch of a pen and every thing would be arranged.

Innis replied in a letter which was most profuse of respects and courtesies. He said he did not comprehend with any distinctness the nature of the favor that was asked of him, but he saw by the repeated assurances of his correspondent that it was something very trifling, and which there could be no doubt any of the numerous friends of Mr. Twiggs, whom he must have often greatly obliged, would be happy to grant. For himself he had fully resolved to avoid all business transactions, and he did not mean that any circumstances should induce him to deviate from his rule.

Kitty shed tears when she read her husband's letter, but she did not ask him to relent. He assured her that he was not influenced by revengeful feelings, but that he did not think it was right to assist in sustaining a man so thoroughly selfish and unjust. At the same time he accorded to his wife full permission to disburse freely to her parents, if they should ever be in want, whatever allowance was necessary to maintain them in comfort.

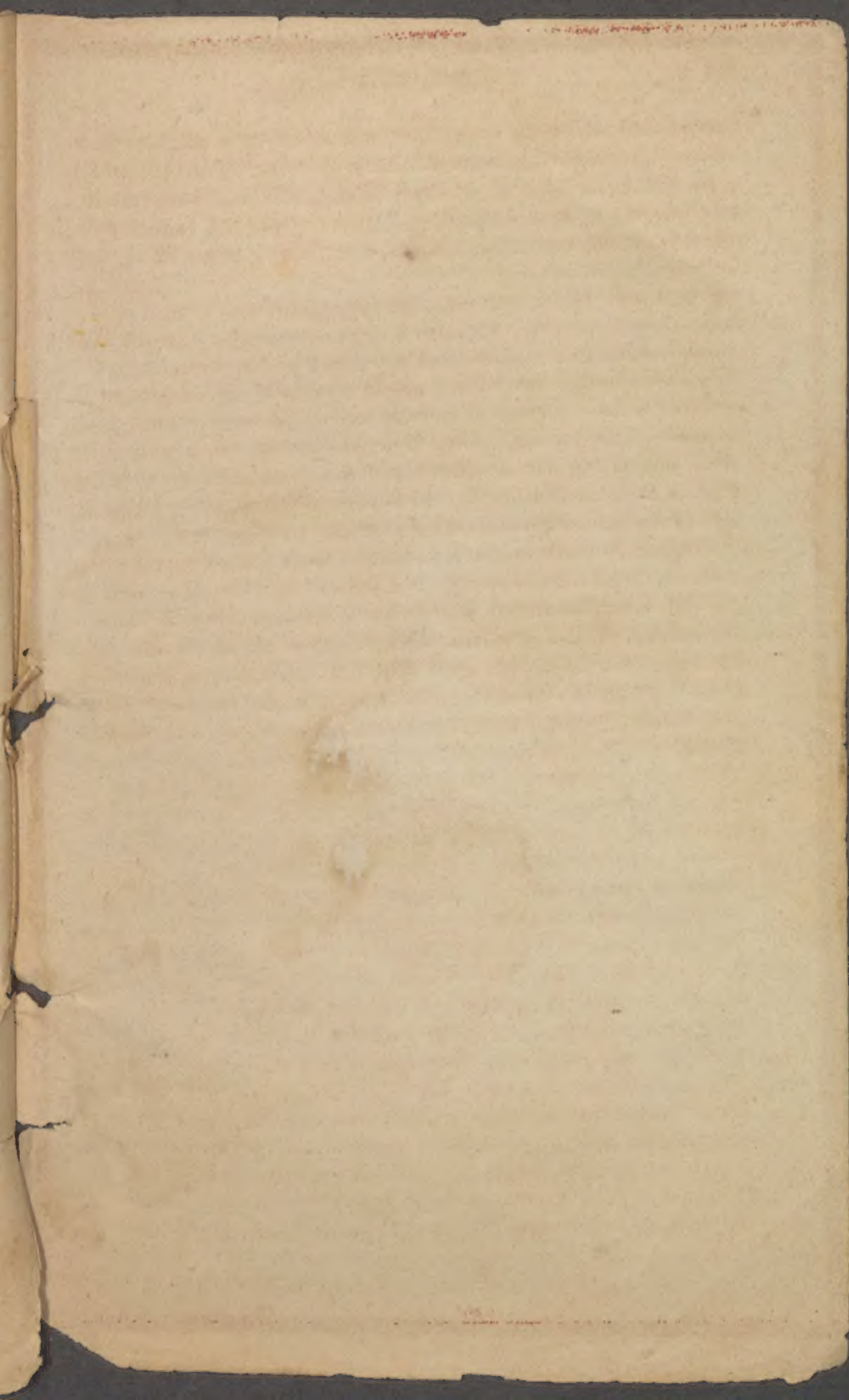
In a few weeks the banker failed, with a crash which startled the financial circles to which he belonged, and surprised the whole community. His large losses had been so skillfully concealed, he had so well preserved all the external show of wealth long after the substance was gone, that few dreamed of his coming downfall. Every thing went by the board. His creditors proved more than usually inexorable, and friends he had none, for he had never shown friendship to man. In all positions he had been severe, exacting and stern, insomuch that there was not a subordinate in the institution of which he was the chief officer who did not both dread and detest him. His property was so situated that he could make no concealments, and when he had made an assignment to his principal creditors they at once took possession of every thing, leaving him only a tenant at sufferance of his dwelling-house, and in temporary possession, by a similar tenure, of his household furniture.

He resigned, of necessity, his place in the bank, and it was not long before he solicited and gladly received the pecuniary stipend which his daughter was permitted to allow him, and which was adequate to all his reasonable wants. Having always made money the standard of merit, he was thoroughly humbled by his loss, and he sunk rapidly in the social scale to the level to which his narrow intellect and a heart void of all ennobling moral qualities belonged, and from which he had long been kept only by his wealth. He had scorned the poor and unfortunate without distinction, and now he was poor and unfortunate himself, and was scorned in turn. Gallingly as were his reverses, they were aggravated by the remembrance of some of his more marked misdeeds in the days of his prosperity, and especially by the thoughts of his having deserted and coolly witnessed the downfall of

the man to whom he owed his fortune, when a slight effort on his part might have saved him from ruin. That Innis had a perfect knowledge of all these facts he did not long doubt, and, therefore, he indulged no hope of increased favor from his son-in-law, whom he never met without a sense of shame and mortification.

Innis and Kitty continued happy, and the dispensers of happiness to others. Frederick does not seek to increase his great wealth, and a considerable portion of his large income flows constantly into the various channels of benevolence which are ever open to those who are desirous of doing good to their fellow-beings. Seth Whitman is still his right hand man, and is the same hilarious, frank, generous fellow who first assisted the Californian to shake off the shackles of debt, and leave his native shores for the land of gold.

Jotham Wakely was not satisfied with his wealth, and went back to found a new city in El Dorado, confident of seeing the day when he should be the Astor of that New World—but instead of realizing his brilliant expectations, he lost his embryo town by a failure of title, and returned to Vermont shorn of half his wealth, but still abundantly rich, and fully convinced of the value of the ancient adage, "Let well enough alone."



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